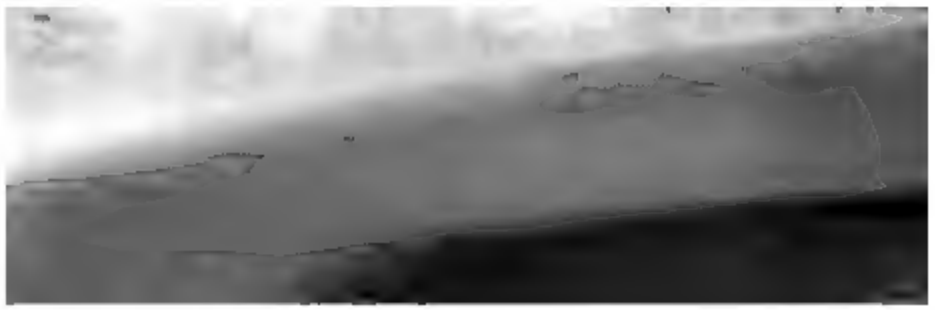

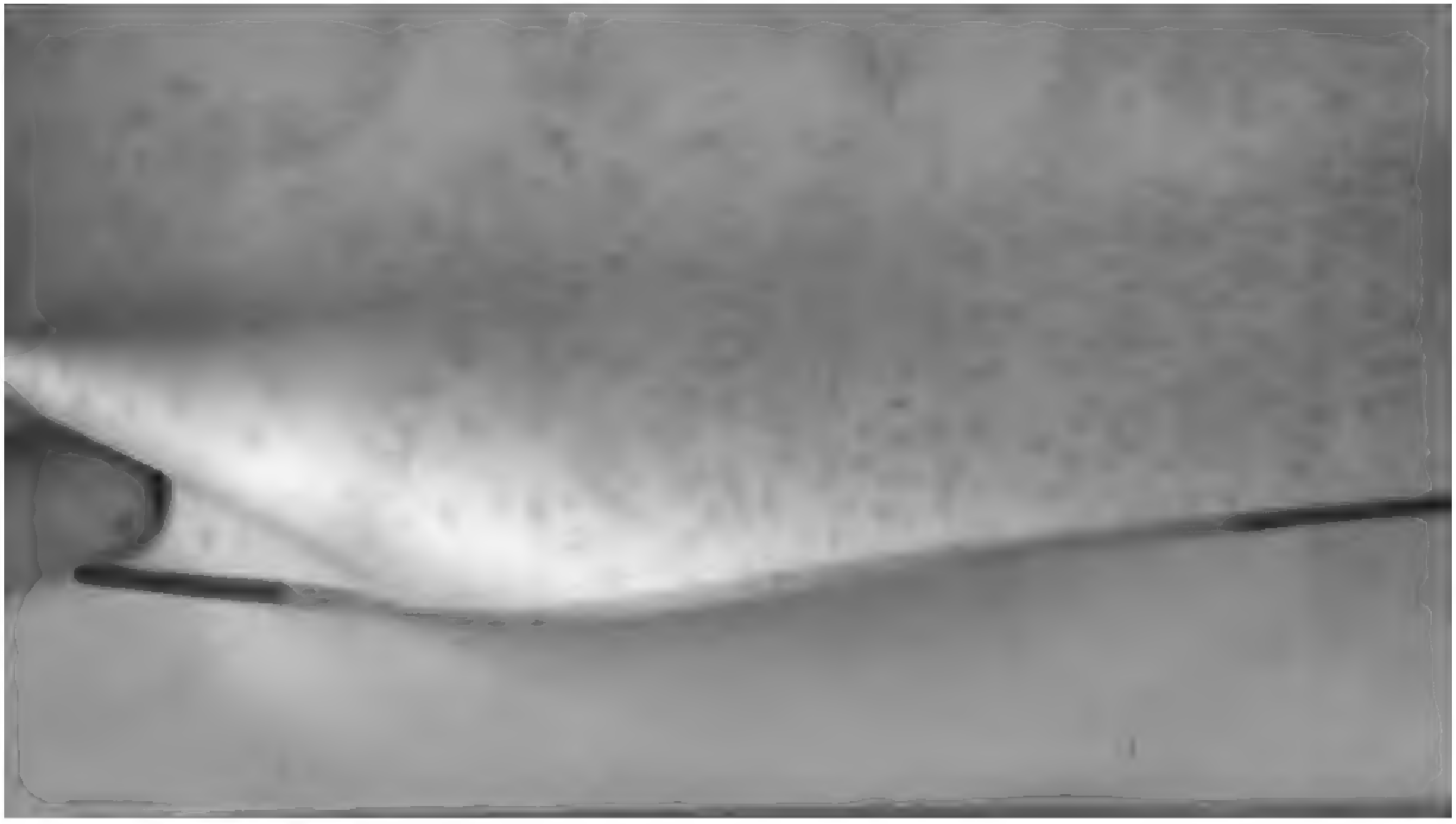

REMAINS,

SELECTED

FROM THE MSS.

OF THE

REV. JAMES BOWDEN,

LATE

MINISTER AT TOOTING, SURREY.

EDITED BY

RICHARD BOWDEN

O may our feet pursue the way
Our pious fathers led;
With love and holy zeal obey
The counsels of the dead! WATTS.

Amisi vitæ meæ testem, &c. PLIN. L. 1. Ep. 2.

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PREFACE.

WHEN an Editor ventures to call the attention of the Public to a volume of Remains, possessing no peculiar claim to originality of thought, or other mark of literary distinction, some apology may reasonably be expected.

To plead the strength of filial attachment, naturally anxious to protract to a later period the memory of a relative endeared by every effort of parental tenderness; or even to plead the urgent request of the Author's intimate acquaintance, who, separated for a season from the society of the man they once loved and revered, would hold in their possession some memorial of his departed worth;—however forcible and sufficient such pleas might appear to the immediate circle of intimacy and friendship, they must, in most cases, be deemed in-

admissible, when, passing the boundary of all minor circles, we address the public at large.

The ground, therefore, on which the Editor, in this instance, would rest his apology, is principally the consideration of the Author's superior and *acknowledged* excellence of character,—the high tone of piety which distinguished him from his very childhood,—and the evident sameness of holy principle which actuated him in all the several relations, and through the diversified circumstances, of a life sacred to the service of his Redeemer and the best interests of his fellow-men.

I have said, his *acknowledged* excellence of character;—and it affords considerable pleasure to the Editor to know, that he can with confidence appeal to that proportion of the public who had the privilege of his father's acquaintance, in testimony of the extraordinary piety, habitual spirituality of conversation, dignified consistency of deportment, and unreserved devotedness to the cause of God, which, through life, so eminently distinguished him.

The neighbourhood in which he so long resided, the villages of the county in which he laboured, his children and servants, with the many respectable characters now living who were educated under his roof, can all testify that the love of God was the element in which he lived, and that the affectionate overflowings of his heart knew no bounds.

Unquestionably he had his infirmities like other men—but how much these were the subject of his secret lamentation and bitter grief, several passages in his Retrospect sufficiently evince.

In short, in him was exemplified one of those instances which prove the high attainment in purity and devotion of which the human mind is capable even in this imperfect state, when habitual meditation on the word of God is combined with fervent prayer and patient perseverance.

Under these impressions, the Editor humbly submits to the candid notice of the Christian Reader the following pages, hoping they may prove the means (if not of amusing the

fancy, yet) of promoting in the heart, under the blessing of God, that same spirit of holiness, that confidence in God and devout *serenity* of mind, which the dear Author was enabled to manifest to the last, when suddenly, like Elijah, he left the chariots of Israel for the Paradise of God!

Let us be weaned from all below,
Let hope our grief expel;
Till death invite our souls to go
Where our best kindred dwell!

WATTS.

R. BOWDEN.

Islington,
April 4, 1814.

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COPY

OF A

SHORT-HAND MANUSCRIPT

FOUND AMONG THE PAPERS OF

THE LATE REV. JAMES BOWDEN,

OF LOWER TOOTING, SURREY.

CONTAINING A

RETROSPECT

OF THE

DIVINE PROCEEDINGS TOWARDS HIM,

TAKEN AT DIFFERENT SEASONS,

FROM THE TIME OF HIS ENTERING ON THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE,

TO THE PERIOD OF HIS DEATH, ON THE 6th APRIL, 1812.

RETROSPECT,

&c.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE DIVINE DEALINGS WITH ME, FROM THE TIME OF MY FIRST ENTERING ON THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE AT FAREHAM IN HAMPSHIRE, JULY 8, 1767.

HAVING received an affectionate and unanimous call from the Church at Fareham, I considered it deeply; and after deliberate consultation with my friends, and frequent application to a Throne of Grace, from a real desire, I trust, of being taught the will of God, I began to think that Divine Providence had marked out my way, and appointed this place as the centre of my future labours. In consequence of this conclusion, I solemnly renewed the surrender of my all unto the Lord, expressing my fervent desire to be employed successfully in his important service, and was soon after set apart to the ministerial work, by prayer and imposition of hands. Known unto the Lord my God are the views and resolutions with which I entered on these solemn engagements.

I hope, that notwithstanding all the treachery and

wickedness of the heart, my professions were sincere and my motives good.

Oct. 20, 1768.—I paid my addresses to ——. Equally sensible of the importance of such a concern, and of the necessity of Divine direction, we were mutually desirous of referring the whole matter to the will and providence of God; and accordingly agreed to set apart one hour every Tuesday, wherein we should meet (though at a great distance from each other), at the Throne of Grace, to acknowledge God in this our way, and earnestly seek his promised aid. This practice of meeting weekly for the purpose of joint supplication to our Father in heaven, with a determination to follow where and where only he should lead, was continued until Tuesday, June the 20th, 1769, when we were publicly united in the dearest bonds: —a day *this*, which will, I hope, be recollected with gratitude to God, and with joy to ourselves, through all eternity. I would devoutly praise my God, that he hath provided me with a companion so affectionate, so pious, and every way valuable. This blessing I receive as a pledge of new-covenant love, and derive tenfold satisfaction from it, as flowing from that precious fountain.—Whence is this, O Lord, to me; to one so sinful, so unworthy thy regard!

On the ordinance day following, I preached a sermon on Gen. xxviii. 20, 21, 22; where, solemnly covenanting with the Lord, I gave myself up to

him, and to his service, seriously, cordially, and for ever. O my God, if there be hypocrisy in my heart, discover it to me; but I thank *thee*, that in this thing, my heart condemneth me not, and I have confidence towards thee. I desire to bless the Lord, that I found much enlargement of heart in the exercise; and this strengthens my hope in him, and in his favourable intentions towards me.—O my God! I would take thee for my Sovereign, my Guide, my Guard, my Friend, my Father, my Portion, my all in all. The holy angels, my fellow-worshippers, and my own conscience, are witnesses to my sacramental vows. O Lord, give me thy grace, that I may fulfil them.

1771.

Jan. 1.—The morning of a New-Year's Day, summons my thoughts with all my powers to review the instances of God's wonderful goodness. Wherever I turn mine eyes, my soul is saluted with miracles of mercy. Mercy has darted its benign and reviving rays through the thickest clouds of darkness, sin, and despondency, and graciously scattered its various influences on a guilty worm. Family mercies, health, and friends have been liberally granted. What shall I render to my God for all his benefits. My heart seems to glow with gratitude. May it vent itself in love and obedience! Give me, O give me more grace, more of thine image, more of the holy, the

2dly. The Lord was pleased, by my unprofitableness, to teach me more of the true method of preaching, and to shew me where I had been deficient; that though I had been much engaged in preaching Christ, and encouraging and beseeching sinners to come to him, yet I had not been sufficiently careful to convince the sinner of his wretched and miserable state by nature, and in opening and discovering to him the plague of his own heart. The necessity of often insisting on these points has appeared to me in a clearer light than ever, while reading that excellent book, "Sheppard's Sound Believer" (a book to which I was very providentially directed), and "Bolton's Method of Comforting afflicted Consciences."

3dly. The Lord was pleased by my unprofitableness to humble me under a deeper conviction of my own inability and negligence, and to bring me rather to desire that grace whereby I should be rendered faithful, than the honour of being successful. Oh how have I been abased under a sense of my deficiency; and how earnestly have I been led to cry for enlightening, quickening, and assisting grace!

4thly. The Lord gave me to see, that my distress and grief on account of the want of success, had much pride in it. This the Lord who searcheth the heart had noticed, and therefore righteously denied what I had so earnestly requested. I see more and more that it is the humble soul whom God will honour.

This morning (being the third or fourth weekly return of the season which I had agreed, with several neighbouring Ministers, to employ in united prayer for a blessing on our labours), the Lord was pleased to make very great and humbling discoveries to my soul. I was given to see something of his glory. My mind was powerfully impressed and filled with the apprehension of his Greatness and Majesty, till in humble abasement I fell at his feet, abhorring myself and shrinking into nothing before him. Now I was brought to be ashamed of, and humbled for, my former deep but pharisaical sorrows on account of my little success. I was led to see more of the dignity of the ministerial work, and my own unworthiness of it. I was brought to acquiesce in the will of God, though he had not seen fit to honour me with that success which I had so impatiently desired. I was laid low at his footstool through a consciousness of the pride of my heart, as unworthy to lift up so much as my eyes to his Sacred Majesty; and felt that I hardly dared to ask for the honour which I had before so importunately and pertinaciously entreated. I was ready to say, Lord! who am I, that I should be called to this great work; an employ that would do honour to the bright angels above? Who am I, that I should be cast down if I have not the great honour of being instrumental in bringing souls to Christ? O give me a heart to subscribe to thy wisdom, in choosing the instruments for the calling of thy chosen ones, by whom thou wilt be

more exalted and glorified. May I be made, by thy grace, such a vessel of honour, be emptied of self, and filled with a pure and ardent zeal for thy glory! Amen and amen.

July 21.—I have been this day observing in public the anniversary of my ordination, from those affecting words, Gal. iv. 11. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

O that I had not so much reason to make the melancholy application! But what shall I say? I would desire to say, The will of the Lord be done. But it is affecting, and truly painful to my soul, to think of being an instrument employed in sealing up poor souls in judicial hardness; to preach the Gospel to sinners who will not hear, that his righteousness may be thereby made more manifest in their everlasting condemnation! But if it be the pleasure of the Lord that it should be so, why shouldest thou, my soul, reply against him?—I have been free in telling my people, that in my most serious reflections, I have been ready to conclude, that the Lord hath no great work of mercy for me to do in this place. O my God! how would it rejoice my heart to find it otherwise!—but my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. O Lord, my God, I have long sown in tears, and shall I not reap in joy? Thou wilt give the precious seed a body, as it shall please thee; and however contrary to my present desires, I shall then reap the precious fruit with joy, with adoration,

and with praise. Oh help me now to say, "Father, glorify thy name!" Amen.

Sept. 25.—Blessed be God! he has been pleased, I trust, at length to crown my labours with some success, and to turn my sorrow into joy.—I have lately been conversing with a young man who appears to be sincerely setting his face Zionward. Working in this town, and attending occasionally at the Meeting, the Lord has been pleased to cause the word to fasten on him, and to carry light and conviction with it to his heart. He thought himself in a right and safe way before; but the Lord graciously convinced him of his mistake while, in the course of my exposition, I was treating on the history of Pharoah's hardness, and the severe and repeated judgments of God made use of to subdue and make him yield.—In this I cannot but observe several things. It was after I had been long and severely exercised, that the Lord was pleased thus to appear and clothe the word with power. When the Lord had brought low, and, in some measure, made humble, then he graciously appeared, and gave the honour of success. This was because he would have the honour ascribed to himself. O my soul, to Him do thou ascribe it! Be thou exalted O my God! in thine own strength. Thou shalt wear the crown; and my joy shall be to see thy glory advancing, and especially to be instrumental therein. It was when I was sowing in tears, that

the Lord was pleased to give the increase, and thus enabled me to reap with joy.

1772.

April 26.—I call upon my soul to praise the Lord, for what he hath done for me! I would praise him for personal mercies, family mercies, and sing of judgment too. The sword hath been drawn, but it is sheathed again. Twice my dear child has been shaken over the grave, and every glimmering hope of her reviving again was gone; but yet she lives—lives as a continued comfort to her dear parents, and, I *hope*, to be an instrument to exalt the praises of her dear Redeemer. Oh that this may be her employ, yea, her everlasting employ! I hope I have cause to sing of mercy in the midst of judgment,—mercy, revealed under all the darkness of this trying dispensation. I found myself enabled to resign my dear babe to her God and my God. With him I left her, with some degree of complacency, submitting to the disposal of a wise and loving Father. Through his rich grace, my soul could rest on the everlasting covenant, and find consolation in his exceeding great and precious promises. I looked unto him and was lightened. This God is my God, for ever and ever: he shall be my guide even unto death.

1773.

June.—Glory be to that God, who has accounted me faithful, putting me into the ministry and has

given me some appearances of his Almighty power attending my poor labours. His name be praised, that all the seed sown is not lost. Though all was sown in weakness, I trust some is raised in power. I ought indeed to be thankful that it is not all barrenness. There are some fruits, though but as the gleanings of the vintage.

A young lady of Portsmouth Common, I have reason to believe, is another seal added to the ministry of the unworthiest of God's servants. Glory be to God for these beginnings, these first-fruits. Thine, O Lord, is the power; be thine the glory! Oh to see the fields white for harvest! Oh, Lord, return!

1774.

June 26.—Again unto thee, O Lord, will I sing praises: I would sing aloud of journeying mercies granted me and my family—of mercy in the midst of judgment would I sing. Myself and son have been thrown out of a chaise, the wheel going over my leg, yet no material hurt received. Lord, all my bones praise thee. May I never lose the sense of thy goodness!—Perhaps this accident and deliverance were designed to render me more humble and dependent, to quicken me in prayer and in praise. Lord, what am I when left of thee! I cannot express how much I am indebted to thee for thine upholding and preventing kindness! Let me live to thee!

July 17.—This day I have been considering my own obligations as a minister, and the duty of my

people as hearers; the talents our Lord has entrusted us with, and his expectations from us, in a discourse founded on the *Parable of the Talents*. What shame and self-abasement become me on account of my unprofitableness! How small a proportion do my best efforts bear to my obligations! O God of grace, quicken me in thy way, enliven my affections, warm my zeal; increase my light, my faith, my strength; widen the vessel, and fill it with thy fullness. Let the image of Christ shine in my conduct, the Spirit of grace attend my feeble ministrations for good to precious souls, that sower and reaper may one day rejoice together.

1775.

Aug. 6.—We have this day been devoting our dear child in baptism. May the Lord take her into his arms, and bless her! Oh that the grace of the covenant may reach the hearts of all our dear children, and effectually engage them *all* on the Lord's side! I have been calling to remembrance God's faithful care and abundant mercy, since I engaged myself to be his; and can set to my seal, that God is true. Hitherto, indeed, he has graciously led, and fed, and delivered me. Nothing *hath* failed of all the good things he spake unto me of; and I *can* believe (blessed be his name) nothing *will*. With this persuasion, I have been reviewing my engagements to be his, esteeming it to be my reasonable service, my unspeakable privilege. O that his promises, and my engagements, may be ever

fresh on my memory and my heart! And oh that I may bear an honourable testimony to the faithfulness of Divine care and mercy, with my latest breath!

Nov. 19.—This is now the fifth Sabbath since the providence of God has, by bodily indisposition, pressed me down, debarring me from that delightful work to which he hath called me! Oh that he would shew me wherefore he thus contendeth with me and the Church! Perhaps it may be to impress the minds of the people with a deeper conviction of the solemnity and value of the Gospel Ministry; to teach them that his ministers are held in his hand, and go and return at his will, and thus excite them to greater diligence in improving the blessing while it lasts. Oh that in this sense the providence may answer the desired end!

But it has lessons to my own soul as well as others. "I have had the sentence of death in myself, that I should not trust in myself, but in God who raiseth the dead." Perhaps it is designed to teach me, that instead of stationing me in a larger sphere, he might justly close my lips in perpetual silence, and thus check my uneasy discontented spirit. Perhaps it is to teach me, that, instead of revealing his grace for my greater usefulness, he might justly set me aside as a broken vessel, no longer to be employed in the least service. Perhaps it is to remind me of past inactivity, and my little im-

provement of those valuable opportunities I have enjoyed. Perhaps he may have further and greater work for me to do; and, by showing me how incapable my constitution is of supporting the fatigues of my present school engagements, may be pointing out my duty, and by these afflictive exercises preparing me for the duties of a wider sphere. However it be, I trust the prevailing language of my heart is this: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." I feel not solicitous as to the event of these exercises as they respect life or death, so that it may be the means of promoting the glory of God. May I be enabled rightly to improve the dispensation! O Thou who givest grace, who givest *more* grace! who hast said, My grace is sufficient for thee! give thy rich grace to my soul; give thy grace to my companion in affliction; and help us to sing of judgment and to sing of mercy.

SOME GENERAL VIEW OF THE CONDUCT OF A GRACIOUS PROVIDENCE IN MY REMOVAL FROM MY CHARGE AT FAREHAM, AND MY SETTLEMENT AT TOOTING.

For several months my health gradually declined at Fareham; and though I continued preaching there for some time in a state of great weakness, yet I soon

found it absolutely necessary wholly to decline my ministerial labours. After having preached from these words, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them," I signified to the people the necessity I was under of declining public service for a season. I took a journey to London, where I continued several months. During this time I visited some relations at Tooting, with no thought of a settlement in that neighbourhood. But "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts." I was soon informed that Dr. Wilton had received a call from the church at the Weigh-house, and was still in debate with his own church at Tooting whether to accept or refuse it. As soon as he knew of my being at Tooting, he called, and urged my preaching a lecture. At that time I had not preached for three months, and was still very weak; but being urged, I at length complied. I chose for my subject, 2 Pet. i. 10: "Give all diligence to make your calling and your election sure." The next morning I was much surprised by a proposal from the Doctor, relative to my settlement at Tooting. He was fully persuaded that I should be acceptable among the people, and should find a comfortable settlement among them. I could say little: nor did I wish to have a will of my own until I should know by farther intimation the will of God. I preached a second time at Tooting, and then returned to Fareham. On the next day I preached what proved to be my last sermon as their pastor,

from these words; "I will hear what God the Lord will speak."

I performed the journey from London to Fareham in a single-horse chaise, in stormy weather, and alone, with more ease than I could have expected; but I had not come in view of the sea from a hill a little out of the town, before I felt the return of the oppression on my lungs, attended with the relaxation of my nerves. These effects of the sea air prevailed so much that the short sermon I preached on the next day was delivered with great difficulty; and two days after I appeared like a person far advanced in a decline. On the evening of that day (Tuesday) I took an affectionate leave of my endeared friends; and there joined with them in a very solemn and cordial surrender of each other to the keeping and direction of our God in covenant.

While staying with my friends in Wiltshire I received a letter from Dr. Wilton, expressing a difficulty, which some of the members of the Church at Tooting had offered, respecting their inviting me to be their pastor, unless the church at Fareham would concur in giving me up. That difficulty the providence of God had removed by the remarkable circumstances attending my last return to Fareham.

May 1, 1776, I arrived at Tooting as a probationer; and after preaching three months, received an unanimous call to the pastoral office. August 25, I publicly accepted the call, preaching from these words; "I determined to know nothing among you

save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." On the 15th of September, I was solemnly set apart to the pastoral office at Tooting, when Dr. Wilton preached from these words; "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."

Oh how many mercies have I seen! Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits. He called me to follow him when I knew not whither I went: but he hath not failed me nor forsaken me. He hath healed my diseases, and opened my lips again to show forth his praises, and still encourages me, by the richest experience of his kindness, and by his most precious promises, to rest in the persuasion that he will never leave me, and that he will never forsake me.

1785.

Dec. 14.—I have been this day calling upon my soul, and all that is within me, to praise the Lord, for all his abundant and long-continued goodness to me. Through very many dangers he has brought me, and from the very borders of the grave, from time to time, hath raised me, and from year to year attended me with renewed displays of his mercy. For forty years I have been cast upon him, and all those years have tasted that he is good. I was cast upon him by my praying parents, who embraced the covenant promise, and pleaded it on my behalf. In early youth, his rich and precious grace enabled me to plead the same promise on my own behalf; and after twenty-

five years' experience or more, I find abundant reason to acknowledge to his glory that I have indeed served a good Master: whatever difficulties have threatened me, he has never left me without some gracious discoveries of his fatherly care. Truly God is good to Israel. I cannot review the experience I have had of his goodness, without astonishment: and O what poor returns have been made, how little has my hard heart been warmed and constrained even by the mercies of God! My obedience and services, alas! have been little more than a desire, though a sincere desire, to glorify God in my body and spirit, which are His. O Lord, quicken thou me in thy way: form my heart anew: let me be anointed with fresh oil: direct my roving heart into thy love! Let it be my heaven upon earth to do thy will; and if it be thy heavenly pleasure, own me as thy servant.

1789.

Dec. 14.—I have again this evening been reviewing the way in which the Lord hath led me, and O what mercy presents itself to my view! It is now more than twenty years since I was placed at the head of a family; when I opened my mouth unto the Lord in a solemn covenant engagement, and made Jacob's vow my own. Blessed be God, he has been with me, and kept me: he has given me bread to eat, and raiment to put on: he has ever been mindful of his covenant, and given me of his choicest blessings. I know of no one more deeply indebted to his goodness

than I am. He hath confirmed my feeble constitution, and given me a happy share of health: he has blessed me with many kind and endeared friends: he has given me a suitable companion of my cares and labours, of my sorrows and my joys—an help meet indeed—a true helper of my faith and joy. He has blessed me with healthful, obedient, and affectionate children: he has blessed me with an affectionate and attentive people: he hath enabled me to be, I trust, faithful and affectionate in dealing with their souls about their eternal interest: he has graciously set his seal on my ministry, and has given me some to be my joy and crown. Blessed be his Name, he hath given me the souls of my children, one after another: he has set his love upon them, and revealed his Son in them: and then he has, in his most indulgent providence, opened a way for their very comfortable settlement in the world. The heart of one of them he hath inclined to the ministry, and given me reason to hope, that when my lips shall be silent in the grave, his mouth shall be open to plead the cause of my dear Redeemer, and proclaim his love: and by the serious disposition of my younger children, he has caused me to hope, that not a "hoof shall be left behind;" that every vessel in my house shall be a vessel of honour; that every child shall be a jewel in my Redeemer's crown. Amen and amen! my heart shall say. It is the sum of my most ardent wishes. It is indeed the highest ambition of my soul, that I

and my house may be wholly, and for ever, the Lord's.

But who am I, O Lord God! and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? Why is this profusion of goodness? Methinks I am reaping a harvest of blessings from the precious seed my pious, my prayerful, parents sowed, who are now in heaven. Their prayers are come up as a memorial before God, and the richness of the blessing seems to centre in me; and, blessed be God, it is a goodly heritage, better than thousands of *gold* and of *silver*. But more than this; I have an interceding Saviour in heaven: He bears me upon his heart—the Lord will be mindful of his covenant. O that my returns were more suitable! O how little have I done, and how defective is all I have attempted! Lord, give me a warmer heart, render me more fervent in spirit, and let my life praise thee!

1790.

Dec. 14.—Another Ebenezer I am now directed to raise, in grateful commemoration of the great goodness of my covenant God, in helping me through another year. The past has been a year of various experience. It pleased the Lord this last summer, and after a very long journey, to visit me with alarming illness, and to call me to converse familiarly with death. Adored be His name in whom I have believed, I found nothing to fear in death;

and, as far as I know my own heart, nothing but an affectionate solicitude for my family, and a sincere desire, in my feeble measure, still to serve my great Master, excited in my mind one wish to live. His mercy has, however, spared me; my health and strength are renewed, and I hope I come forth from the trial animated with a stronger desire than ever to be instrumental in glorifying the name of the Lord; and this encourages me to hope he will not withhold the blessing. He who forms the instrument designs to use it.—Amen! my heart shall say, Amen!

These two last years have been seasons of great trial also in my ministerial capacity. It was at a time when I was solacing myself in the general affection and esteem of my dear people, and said, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved," that my comfort was interrupted by the unkind treatment of one of our old members, a deacon of the Church. Blessed be God, my own heart did not reproach me: and when I review my mercies, what matter for praise and cheerful thanksgiving do I see! Mercies stand thick around me! I have to bless my God for ease and health, strength of body, and especially for a heart that sincerely desires to serve and glorify him. I have cause also to bless the Lord, for frequent enlargement in duty, for some success, for a people united to me in affection, for some

who help me by their prayers. And blessed be God for many family mercies;—a family pleasant to me and devoted to the Lord:—my dear partner a real helpmate, as to this world and another. Three of my dear children have subscribed with their own hand unto the Lord, and a fourth appears to be earnestly seeking Him! Oh! what shall I render unto the Lord for all these most precious benefits! Indeed he hath done great things for me. I know not any one whom he hath so remarkably and richly distinguished with his special favours. Bless the Lord, O my soul! O that my heart may grow warmer and warmer in its affection and returns to such a benefactor! To his disposal I can cheerfully commit all my temporal interests. Though worldly means are lessened, the Lord causes me continually to rejoice in my work; and as to other things, it is sufficient for me that my Father in heaven knoweth that I have need of these things. With this assurance I could preach, methinks, though *all* recompense from my people should fail; for I seek not *theirs*, but them; and the less I receive from them, the more I trust I shall have when the Great Shepherd shall appear.

This year, also, O thou ever-blessed God, be thou my helper; and whether comforts or crosses await me, give thou me strength equal to my day, and that shall be enough! Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and I know thy ways are all judgment. Whether I shall see the close of this year I know not,

nor am I anxious to know; but whether I live, I trust I shall live to the Lord, or whether I die, I shall die to the Lord; so that, whether living or dying, I shall be the Lord's. Amen and amen.

1791.

Dec. 14.—Thus far the Lord hath helped me. O how great is thy goodness, O Lord, which thou hast wrought for them that hope in thee, before the sons of men! The last has been a year of mercies, personal mercies, and family mercies. The Lord has been pleased to keep sickness from us, and blessed us with health. He has been pleased to keep trouble from us, nor suffered any breach to be made upon us, nor any very distressing breach to be made among our immediate connexions. But O how soon may the scene be changed! The comforts now standing so thick around me may very soon wither and die: yet, blessed be God, they are safe until he is pleased to beckon them away, till he comes to transplant them into a richer soil. Glory be to God, for reason I have to believe that he has adopted four of my children into his own family, and poured out his Spirit upon them! Glory, glory be to the riches of free and sovereign Grace! He has not done so with every family, nor even with every family of his servants in the *ministry*. O may his mercy still abound, and gather yet more under his outstretched wings! Lord, let them be in prosperity or adversity as to the things of this world, as thine

infinite wisdom shall direct; but my heart's desire and prayer for them is, that they may be saved. Among the people of my charge, I bless God, there is peace. One of our members and deacons, and a precious fruit of my ministry, the Lord has been pleased to lay aside from usefulness by depriving him of reason. May the Lord restore health to him in due time, and sanctify the affliction to us all!—I fear this has been a year of unprofitableness in my ministry; at least no fruit at present appears: yet, blessed be God, he has so far awakened my soul to desire to serve and be profitable to my fellow-creatures, and so far stirred up a spirit of prayer in me, that I cannot but hope he will in his own time command the blessing. O that I could discover the occasion of my unprofitableness! Lord, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me! Yet would I be willing to do the work which thou hast allotted me, though it be not enlivened with success; but O Lord, how long! Afresh would I, O God, my God, make a full surrender of myself and my all unto thee. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Teach me thy will. To serve thee, I trust, is my delight. Charge me with a commission. O fill me with thy Spirit! Be thou my strength! I know not what trials may await me this year; but thou hast said, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee," and I want no more. Yea, though the sharpest sufferings attend me, and I be called to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. I

would go forth in thy strength, leaning on thine arm, and encouraged by thy promises. Lord, let thy strength be proportioned to my weakness, my duties, and my trials! I trust my future days will be filled up with endeavours to serve thee. Oh let thy grace crown my feeble attempt! However it be, I wish to be humbly acquiescent in thy will. Father, glorify thy name! Amen and amen.

1792.

Dec. 14.—Another year of my pilgrimage is completed. Oh how fast does time, precious time, pass away! how vast the concerns that hang upon it, and of what importance it is that its precious moments be well improved! May I never forget the great end for which I have my being, nor spend one day without a realizing and impressive regard to that vast eternity, that boundless, glorious eternity, to which I am hastening. It is an awakening thought! May I ever read and meditate, converse and act, pray and preach, under the influence of it! May I estimate the pleasures and pains, the possessions and wants, the duties and cares of life by the relations they bear to it! May I be enabled to exercise more active zeal, in the duties and labours which are directed towards it! I do not want for motives. O that my life were as full of labours for God as it is and has been of kindness and mercy from him! Indeed he has been drawing me with cords of love, the tenderest and most powerful. While I review his

love! Many times, alas! how cold and formal am I in drawing near to God, even in those duties which he has often enlivened, and rendered delightful by the special tokens of his smiling presence! What a mercy it is that the progress of salvation in my soul does not depend on the stedfastness of my desires or endeavours, or the spirituality and suitableness of my frames. It is God's work; his sovereign mercy began it, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. O my soul! he has not left thee without reason to conclude, that he has set his love upon thee: and if so, he will rest in his love; he will save thee in spite of all the fury of thy enemies, and from all the guilt of thy sins, and from all the iniquity of thine heart. Lord, I would, I trust I would, yield myself entirely and without reserve unto thee. Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight; only bring me, and keep me near thyself. Rebuke and chasten me if it be thy fatherly pleasure; only give me grace to bear what thou shalt be pleased to lay upon me: let my soul be quickened in thy way, and be reaching forth towards those things which are before.

In the month of April, our new Meeting-house was opened. I trust it was a *good* day. God's presence was earnestly sought, and he seemed to reveal his grace, and shew us a token for good. Blessed be his Name, he has disposed the minds of many to attend, and to attend with seriousness. The congregation increases; the prospect of usefulness brightens. A meeting for prayer is instituted, and a spirit of prayer seems to be given.

Lord, receive thine own work! and in order to this, grant a warmer heart to one who wishes to be thy faithful servant!

This year the Lord hath seen fit to try me by a visitation particularly affecting. He has suffered my family to be visited with sickness and with death! My dear Elizabeth early in the year was seized with a bad cough, which gave serious alarm. Every endeavour to relieve proved ineffectual: disease increased: she was strongly attached to life, and wanted fuller evidence of her interest in the covenant. However, God shewed himself a prayer-hearing God, granting abundant satisfaction to her and to us. Oh! blessed be God, who had so long preserved our comfort, and saved us from the approach of death! Blessed be God, that this first breach did not appear an angry breach! Blessed be God for a mind resigned to the will of Him who performeth all things for me! Blessed be God for the abundant hope I have in the death of this dear child! Great is the satisfaction I feel in reflecting, that just before her departure, holding my child in my arms, I gave her up to God, who received her with a smile: her blessed spirit took its flight, while her feeble lips cried "Joys!!" Blessed be God who so sweetly welcomed a child of mine to his eternal home and into his everlasting arms!

And now I am entered on another year. Lord, I desire, I trust, from my very heart, to yield my-

self to thee; to do thy will, to be at thy disposal, and to wait thy pleasure. I am not solicitous to know the events of the year: it is enough to know that thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory! Lord, let me be kept near to thee; let me live to thy glory; let my precious time be carefully redeemed and my soul be preserved in a waiting posture, that whenever thou shalt call, I may be willing to obey! Even so, Amen!

1794.

Dec. 14.—Another year has been added to my mortal life, and it has been crowned with the goodness of my God in very many instances. Severe affliction has also visited me. I know O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that it is in very faithfulness I have been afflicted. By the springs of water hast thou led me. Thou hast tried my faith, to improve it. Thou hast taken a dear earthly comfort from me, to make me possess more of thyself. Thou hast loosed a cord by which I was strongly bound, and thereby enabled me to rise more habitually and sweetly in heavenly meditation. Thy manifested love has constrained me, and my heart has been with more ready zeal engaged in thy service. Thanks to thy rich grace that I feel my heart more dead to the world, and disposed to value life only, or at least chiefly, as the opportunity of serving the God of my salvation! Lord! suffer

nothing to chill my affections towards thee, or enfeeble my attempts to serve thee.

This year the Lord has been pleased to visit us with another trying dispensation, in the alarming illness of our youngest child. His precious life seems still to hang in doubt, though, blessed be God, appearances are more favourable than they were. Should life be continued, there seems reason to fear his lameness will be perpetual. However, he is in God's hand. To his disposal, I trust, I do commit him, with a full resignation of my will to His; with this wish only respecting him, that God would form him for himself, whether to serve and enjoy him in this world, or in another. If it please God to spare his life, and he should come forth from this visitation taught by the Spirit of God, called by Divine grace, and prepared to declare what God hath done for his soul, though, like Jacob, he *halt* upon his thigh, I shall sing of the mercy of God, and call upon my soul to notice every halting step as a signal of mercy bestowed. Oh! to have all my children joined to the Lord, and under the protection of his covenant promises!

Blessed be God, I have this year a fresh song of praise, on account of the conversion of another of my dear children. O Lord! how shall I praise thee enough for mercies so great, so distinguishing, so often repeated! My soul exults in the thought of meeting all my dear children in my heavenly Father's house together, and praising God there

for them and with them. And I rejoice in the persuasion, that, when I am no more in this world, they will be under the fatherly care of HIM whose mercy is from generation to generation upon them that fear him, and his faithfulness unto children's children; that they will be praising God upon earth, while I am praising him in heaven. And now, Lord, what wait I for? Truly my soul waiteth upon thee. I wait especially to hear what thy providence and thy grace will speak respecting my afflicted child. O may my heart's desire be granted concerning him also, and may this little one be a chosen vessel, filled with thy grace, shewing forth thy love, on earth, or in heaven!

To Thee I commend myself once more, as my Counsellor and my Guide. Another year opens before me: what events it will disclose, or whether I shall see the end of it, is known only to Thee. But, Lord, into thy hands I commend my body and spirit, my person and family, my spiritual and my temporal interests. Help me to improve every talent to thine honour, to serve Thee with singleness of heart! O to be made more instrumental in advancing thy glory, and gathering souls unto thee! And when I die, may it be with joy to follow Thee.—Amen.

1795.

Sept. 25.—This day will, I trust, be memorable to me while I have any being, for the experience I have had of the care of an indulgent Providence.

Riding on a common, my horse, though remarkably sure, came entirely down with me: I was thrown over his neck; and my foot being for some time in the stirrup, my situation was extremely perilous: but that God, whose blessed angels, as ministering spirits, have charge concerning the necessities of those who shall be heirs of salvation, and who is Himself a present help in time of need, caused the animal, after he had recovered himself, to stand perfectly still until I had disengaged my foot.—I hope I saw, and gratefully acknowledged, the hand of God in this deliverance. As often as I visit that spot, or recollect that escape, may I with a thankful mind renew my Ebenezer, and say, Hitherto the Lord hath helped me! Why is my life thus graciously prolonged, but that I may be more diligent in the service of my God! May my time, and my every opportunity and ability of service, be more entirely devoted to His praise!

On my return from a long journey in the West, I was stopped by a highwayman in Coombe Lane, and robbed of my watch and about four guineas. My horse's bridle and the girths of the saddle were cut through; but, blessed be God, no personal injury was done to me.—This is another instance of preservation in the midst of danger. I would wish ever to reflect on it with gratitude. Lord! let me live while I live!

Dec. 14.—This day I have completed my fiftieth

year. What a wonder am I to myself! Little reason indeed had I to expect that my feeble lamp, which has ever burnt so dimly, and several times been just ready to expire, would have lasted out so long. How many, younger and stronger than I, have I seen drop into the grave before me; but, lo! I am spared! A kind Providence has guarded and preserved my life, and again and again recovered the flame when languishing. And why am I thus spared beyond all expectation? Surely it is, that the experience of the mercy of God, so frequently renewed, may provoke my gratitude and quicken my languid endeavours to serve and honour my Benefactor. Oh! to feel my heart more alive to God; habitually drawn forth in more ardent desires and efforts for the prosperity of his kingdom! O that, while my lamp continues to burn, my light may shine before men and the grace of God be abundant in me; that I may live not only comfortably, but usefully.——I hope I have reason to be thankful for times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The great things of God's Law, and of another world, have lately dwelt with more than usual weight upon my mind. Desires to serve God with my spirit have been awakened, and I have been enabled to address my people with peculiar affection and earnestness: and though, as to the appearance of the congregation, there is no increase in numbers; still, there are some pleasing circumstances, which en-

courage us to believe that God is with us of a truth. But, why is it that Christ and his Gospel are not more generally esteemed! Oh! for the more abundant out-pouring of the Spirit of Christ, to recommend that dear Redeemer to the souls of men! Then his Name will be precious, his Gospel precious, his ordinances precious, and all things will appear but loss in comparison with him!

This year is my "Jubilee." May it be a year of release to my soul; release from the power of sin and the influence of this present evil world! May this year advance me to the fuller enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints! I long for a sweeter and more immediate sense of pardoning mercy, and the love of a covenant God! O may I this year feel more enlargement in his service; and with more zeal and affection, and with more manifest success, sound the Gospel trumpet, preaching deliverance to the captives! May the Spirit of the Lord God be upon me to this end! O that the Lord would anoint me with fresh oil!——God has in his providence this past year been opening our ears to instruction. He has visited me with another afflicting bereavement. My youngest child, after a long illness, was in March removed by a fever. This second stroke was trying indeed! But, blessed be God, he did not withhold the supplies of his grace: I was led to deprecate deserved wrath, and to pray, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore

thou contendest with me! The wish of my heart was to preserve a becoming spirit under affliction, and to discover the fruits of affliction sanctified! Blessed be God for a cheerful and satisfactory persuasion, that this my dear child is gone to his dear sister and his dearer Saviour in heaven! He had a mind prepared by grace to seek, and serve, and enjoy God. Prayer seemed his delight, and his heart appeared to be devoutly engaged in it—Prayer, I trust, is now exchanged for praises.—O that we may all meet, without one exception, in that blessed world, and love and praise and enjoy the God of our salvation eternally together!

God has been pleased also to make a breach in the family of our friend Mr. H. by the removal of his eldest daughter. I trust she died in the faith, and found Jesus Christ precious to her soul in the hour of dissolution, leaving the world with this song of praise on her lips—

> Glory, honour, praise, and power
> Be unto the Lamb for ever!

I trust there was mercy in this afflictive dispensation.

Mrs. B——y has been for several weeks in circumstances of very alarming illness; her life still hangs in doubt. O that this visitation may be seriously regarded, and the voice of God therein attended to! O that this visitation may be in mercy! Lord, let all thy ways, concerning me and my family and friends, be mercy and truth.—Many mercies have

I received—great mercies—through a long succession of years: and, under the sweet influence of the mercy of God, I would again present my body, my soul, my family, my all, to HIM; accounting it not only my reasonable service, but my highest honour, to be thus devoted to the Lord. O let thy Presence go with me this year also, and prepare me fully for whatever events may befal me! If this year prove my Jubilee in the noblest sense, and the trumpet's joyful sound proclaim my release from every burden, and announce my return to the glorious inheritance of the saints; then,

> **Lord, let my last experience prove**
> **Thy faithful and unchanging love!**

1796.

Dec. 14.—Thus far the Lord has led me on, with increased experience of his manifested mercy. I have now closed my fifty-first year. Blessed be God, who, having led me about these many years through the wilderness, has shewed me his great mercy, and granted me his salvation. He has exercised me with a variety of trying dispensations, but he has always been my present help in time of need: his promise has never failed, his grace has never been withheld. Many comforts he has afforded me; and when he has been pleased to call me to resign one and another of them to him, he has proportioned my strength to the trial, sanctified the sorrows of reluctant nature, and shewed me, that, in

keeping even these his commandments, there is great reward. "Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and bless thy name!"

My eldest son has been, by the providence of God, this year removed from London to Hull, with his family. He is now far separated from us, but his God and our God appeared to direct his way; and from present circumstances and opening prospects, we are all satisfied it is the right way. My second son has also found at Hull a pleasant resting-place. The Lord has blessed them: and he *will* bless them: they will be known, I trust, and their children, "as a seed whom the Lord hath blessed." My third son now engages my anxious thoughts and cares. He has finished his academic studies—May the Lord direct, and command the blessing! O may I see him a faithful minister of the Gospel of the grace of God! preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified, as the only way of deliverance for the condemned sinner and the enslaved captive!

I esteem it a great mercy, that in my advanced years the Lord has been pleased to grant me a more confirmed state of health than I have enjoyed these many years. I have now strength to go through three services on the Sabbath and one in the week, in my own place, besides preaching occasionally elsewhere: and, blessed be his Name, he gives me a heart to serve him cheerfully, with the ability I have. I think I can say I do not relax in my love to my adored

Master as I increase in years. I would hope he enables me with more simplicity and godly sincerity to seek his glory, in the salvation of souls. I would not live, but to proclaim his grace and serve his cause. I would not hide any talent with which he has entrusted me, or omit any opportunity of service which he puts in my power. Oh for a larger measure of his grace, to make my heart sincere, to strengthen every holy principle, and make my soul alive to the cheerful discharge of every duty, and to the lively impression of every sentiment of gratitude and love!

I have this year completed the twentieth anniversary of my appointment to the pastoral charge in this place. Blessed be God, that, amidst many lamented infirmities, I have reason to take a thankful and pleasant review of these years. Deep humiliation belongs to me, but glory to my condescending Master: he has been pleased to honour an unworthy instrument with the display of his gracious power. A happy number I have to rejoice over, who have found the word preached amongst us the savour of life to their souls! Some are gone to glory; they had an entrance administered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: and others are following in the footsteps of the flock. ——This year, blessed be God, has proved a year of in-gathering amongst us. Mr. L. and Mr. S. came here under some serious impressions, and it

appears, by their general temper and conversation, that God has been found of them in this place. Others appear to be seriously inquiring the way of salvation. Blessed be God, who does not leave us without a token for good! Pour out thy Spirit, gracious God, in a more abundant manner, upon preacher and hearers! Give me more enlarged views of Gospel truth! Give me to feel more sweetly and powerfully the constraints of a Saviour's love! Let the holy fire never be extinguished, but let it burn brighter and brighter! O make me a faithful witness for Thee, a faithful friend to precious souls! O help me to approve myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and render me a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish! Amen, and amen.

1797.

Dec. 14.—What unnumbered expressions of the Divine mercy, in blessings of the upper and of the nether spring, in blessings temporal and spiritual, in blessings personal and relative, in blessings renewed and long continued, do this day appear to my reflecting mind! How loudly do they call for renewed expressions of gratitude and devotedness, of dependence and confidence in the God of my salvation! Let me never indulge one unbecoming, one distrustful thought; let me cherish sentiments of grateful affection; let me glow with zeal whenever his honour is concerned, and habitually pro-

claim to others, "The love of Christ constraineth me!" In the dark and cloudy day, let me fly to his shadow, let me lean upon his arm, and with holy confidence rely on his mercy and his truth. Let me uniformly yield myself to his disposal, and, with sweet recumbency of soul, rest in the assurance that his mercy, his truth, and love, will perform all things for me. Let me listen to his reproving voice, and bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him: let me listen to his instructing voice, and be prepared to sanctify the Lord God, when his hand lies heavy upon me: let me listen to his comforting voice, nor refuse the strong consolation which his mercy has treasured up for his tried people, in an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. O what a mercy, to have access to the ear, the arm, the heart, of such a friend! to see him in his word, to meet him in his ordinances and in secret devotion, and to hear him say, "I will surely do thee good!" Blessed preparative for a time of suffering! Be encouraged, O my soul, and say, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life! Oh, let me taste and see that the Lord is good, nor ever suffer the aspect of outward dispensations to lead me to distrust his power, his truth, or his grace! Blessed be his Name, he has done much for me respecting body and soul, things spiritual and things temporal! He has satisfied me with his goodness: he has provided me with many com-

forts and kind friends; and he has also given me a heart to love and serve him: he has revived in my heart a concern for the glory of his Name, in the conversion and salvation of precious souls: he has honoured me as an instrument in stirring up the hearts of men to unite in endeavours to spread the Gospel in the dark places of our own county; and he encourages our hopes, by very many promising appearances already, that our labour shall not be in vain. O Lord of the harvest, send forth more labourers into thy harvest! Let those who are gone forth through our means into the benighted villages, to preach the Gospel in thy name, be prepared by thy Spirit, protected by thy power, and succeeded by thy influence!——In the society under my immediate charge, he continues to give me encouragement: we have peace among ourselves, and we have tokens for good that God is indeed with us. He appears to have given me just reason to rejoice over Miss E——s, whose heart he has prepared to receive instruction. O that he would grant us showers of blessings!——God has also distinguished me with family mercies. My children, I hope, I can rejoice in as children of his grace. My two eldest sons have obtained comfortable establishments, and are rejoicing in his salvation. My third son has also engaged in a marriage connection—may the Lord sanctify the union! May the Spirit of God rest upon him, and render him a faithful, affectionate, and zealous

preacher of the Lord Jesus Christ! Nor can I doubt but my God will extend his counsel and his care to all the rest, as their cases may require; and will supply all their need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

The judgments of God are still abroad in the earth; the sword of war still remains unsheathed. We have rumours of war in our own country; alarms of insurrection within our own borders. God in his providence seems to be giving notice of great revolutions in the governments of the world: he is shaking terribly the earth. The day of the wrath of the Lamb appears to be coming, wherein he will avenge the blood of his faithful servants, who in different ages have suffered in his cause—And who shall abide the day of his appearing? Have we not reason, as a nation, to tremble before him? Oh, what terrors may we be called to witness before the close of another year!—But do I not, O Lord, know thy name, and may I not trust in thee? To the arms of thy power and grace I rejoice that thou hast encouraged me to flee. O increase my faith, that I may trust and not be afraid! When storms arise, and creature confidences are removed; when heart and flesh shall be ready to fail for fear; bid me come unto thee: shed abroad thy love in my heart: and, in a course of close walking with thee, give that holy familiarity and confidence of friendship which shall direct my soul to thee in a stormy day. O to be made wholly and more than ever thine! Fulfil thou the good pleasure of thy good-

ness in me; and say unto my soul, "I am thy salvation."

1798.

Dec. 14.—Another year's mercies I have been this day reviewing, with much heartfelt gratitude and delight. When I call to remembrance God's mercies to me and to my house, I feel the obligations I am under, far more than I am able to express: my soul seems to be overcharged with God's great goodness—in favours *so* great, flowing in so many streams, continued so long, and by covenant promises made perpetual! Well may I cry, What has God wrought! what works of mercy in me and for me! What deliverances, what supplies, what refreshments and comforts, has he granted me! "He has spread a table for me in the wilderness; nay, in the presence of mine enemies." "He hath anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over." I have temporal mercy, sweetened with covenant love: I have spiritual good things, the pledge of eternal joys: I have bodily health and strength; and a devoted heart (blessed be God, whose grace has provided that Lamb for a burnt offering), a heart that finds its choice and chief delight in being employed by him and for him, and in seeking his glory.—And O what a house has he built for me! He hath given me, as a companion of my cares and comforts, a fellow-helper indeed; one whose views and whose hopes perfectly accord with my own. He has looked upon our dear children, and not singled out an individual, but has chosen and loved

them all: two of them he has already exalted to his palace above, to shine in all the glory of celestial spirits; and six others he has called into his church, and into his covenant here on earth; pledging his truth to care for them, provide for them, and bestow his blessings upon them, as his dear children, in time and through all eternity. Four of them are formed into families, are united to partners, who, I trust, are all the children of God; and in their settlement they have all the most encouraging prospects of comfort and usefulness. My third son, who is now settled, appears to be formed, by the blessed Spirit of God, for a life of usefulness in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in a situation very encouraging to the views of one who is desirous to win souls to Christ. My youngest daughter is blessed with a partner, whom the Lord Jesus has also accounted faithful, putting him into the ministry and honouring him in it. My second son has been recovered from a very alarming fever, and brought out of his affliction with a soul greatly profited and comforted. My eldest son has been, and still is, greatly blessed of God, respecting this life and another. We have two daughters yet in single life, who are administering greatly to our comfort, by their affectionate and pious carriage. Blessed, blessed be God! there is not one root of bitterness springing up to trouble us: our great Redeemer has not left *one* hoof behind of all that is ours: he has

given us our hearts' desire, "and has not withholden the request of our lips." His grace enabled us to give our children to him: he has given them back to us, beautified with his salvation, enriched with his grace, dignified with the high honour that pertains to the children of God.—Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name—But, what thanks can I express, that bear any proportion to blessings and honours so great, so exalted, and so various? Lord, who am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto, and shewn me such great things as these! My soul many times seems overpowered with the goodness of the Lord my God. Like a vessel overcharged, it wants vent, it wants utterance, it wants ability to express the gratitude it would offer, and which favours so great, and so abundant, so loudly call for. It is a relief to my labouring soul, to reflect that "praise waits," in constraining silence now waits, for thee, O God, in Zion. But this will not always be the case: no, my soul, it will not be so in heaven! There thy whole work will be praise. Released from the prison of this clay, thou wilt be enlarged to a delightful and glorious liberty therein, of which here below no suitable conception can be formed. I hope I feel in some measure now, the obligation to active service calling me to the most assiduous pursuit of all that relates to the interests of the Gospel, and the glory of my Lord. I would serve him; I

would desire to consecrate all the power, the ability, the opportunity, he shall ever give me to his service and his glory. The day is indeed far advanced, and the night is at hand: the shadows of the evening are advancing: let me, then, be abounding in the work of the Lord! O my soul, *let thy Lord find thee so doing!*

I have reason with peculiar gratitude to acknowledge the great mercy of God to me, for some time past, in giving me a more than usual supply of His Spirit, from which I have derived increasing seriousness and habitual spirituality of temper. The word of God has been more precious to me: my private devotions have been uncommonly fervent and delightful to me: in my public services he has enabled me to discourse with more fulness, life, and fervour: he has given me a deeper interest in the affections of his people. I believe their souls have been more richly fed under the ministry of the word; and he hath given to my own soul meat to eat that the world knoweth not of. His ways are indeed pleasantness and peace.

This has been a blessed morning to me indeed. Whether it be the commencement of my dying year I know not, nor do I desire to know. My times, O Lord, are in thine hand.

> Jesus, I trust in thee alone,
> And know in whom I trust.

Or whether God is about to try me with some very peculiar affliction, and therefore by his kindest

visits and richest consolations is preparing me for it, I know not. "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt:" only, as my day is, so let my strength be.—Or perhaps, as I am sometimes encouraged to hope, God is about to revive his work amongst us, and is thus preparing the heart of his minister for more eminent service:—who can tell? In the evening-tide there may be light. Blessed Jesus, arise and shine: appear in thy power: let thy word be victorious!

I have often been discouraged by the remissness of many in attending the ordinances of the sanctuary, and the low esteem in which the word of God is held; but God has led me to seek his presence with more earnestness, and made my heart rejoice in the experience of it. Many times I have been afraid of my own heart, lest I should want simplicity and godly sincerity in preaching the Gospel; but I trust in this respect also the Lord has answered my petitions, purifying my heart by faith. O Lord, let me have to say in truth, "To me to live is Christ!"

In our missionary labours the Lord has favoured our wishes, and in various places attended the word with power. I have found encouragement: our prospects have brightened, insomuch that the enemy of souls appears standing at our right hand to resist us. His endeavour is, to break the peace of the society, and put a stop to the exertions of its most active members; but may the Lord give us wisdom

to direct, and grace to enable us to counteract his devices! And now, Lord, I commend myself to thee; my family, my people, my all, to thee; let thy grace be sufficient for me, amidst all my labours and conflicts, living and dying! While I live, O teach me to do thy will! Let not one whom thy love has so powerfully constrained, ever want a heart prepared for any service by which thine honour may be promoted; and when my work on earth is done, Lord, bid me come to thee! Amen, and amen.

1799.

Dec. 14.—Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all my days! I have now closed another year, enriched with the experience of Divine faithfulness. I have this day completed my fifty-fourth year. The experience of many enjoyments encourages and confirms my faith; while it constrains me to acknowledge, with heart-felt gratitude, that no one thing has failed me of all that the Lord had promised. I have been traversing a wilderness, and wilderness trials have fallen to my lot, but God has been with me. He has guided me with his eye, sustained me with his arm, strengthened me with his Spirit, and refreshed me with his consolations. He has sanctified my sorrows, and by them has done me good: he has sweetened my comforts, and caused me to taste his love in them: he has blessed my bread and my water, and assured me that his mercy endureth for ever. Blessed be God, who hath hither-

to kept me in his fear, nor suffered me by any gross misconduct to cause the name of Jesus and his holy ways to be evil spoken of! Many who seemed to have been as steady in his service, and whose gifts and graces promised greater advantage to his cause, have been permitted to go astray after other gods, and lost the blessedness they had spoken of. Blessed be his adored Name, whose grace hath enabled me to hold fast the profession of my faith, and still enables me with purpose of heart to cleave unto him! Lord, to whom should I go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Where can I find a banqueting-house like thine, so richly furnished with delights?

Why should my foolish passions rove?
Where can such sweetness be,
As I have tasted in thy love,
As I have found in thee!

The world can boast of no treasure so rich or desirable, no honours so substantial and ennobling, no pleasures so pure and divine. O give me more of thyself, of thy grace, of thine image, of thy Spirit, of thy love! These are the honours, these the riches, these the pleasures, after which my soul aspires! Blessed be his Name, that, amidst many lamented infirmities, I trust I can say, I serve the Lord with my spirit, and that he has been pleased to honour me not with service only, but with success! Some encouraging appearances are at this time found among the people of my particular charge; some buds and blossoms

appear. O that they may be perfected unto good fruit! Missionary labours appear to be more especially honoured; and the prospect of still more extended labours affords increased encouragement. Lord, let the harvest be yet greater and greater, and more faithful labourers be yet sent forth! If it be the will of God, I pray to have bodily strength and fervour of spirit, equal to this day of arduous engagement; or, if I must shortly yield to the infirmity of advanced years, and be dismissed from the field, I pray that others may be commissioned to enter into these labours, who shall appear to be men "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Blessed be God, I have enjoyed a year free from distressful anxiety, from strife and contention, from bodily sufferings and family bereavements! In a day of great scarcity, I know no want of the good things of this life. While the terrors of war are abroad, I live in peace; in peace in my family, in peace in the church, and in peace in my own mind. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name."

My third son has this year been set apart, and ordained for the sacred work of the ministry. He has a field of arduous labour before him, and I trust a labouring soul. May he obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful; and oh! may much success attend his endeavours for the good of souls!—My eldest and second sons seem to have hearts prepared of the Lord to go forth into the highways and hedges in missionary labours.

Blessed be God, who giveth them to feel for the miseries of perishing men, and for the honour of the dear Redeemer's Name! May the Lord bless and keep them, fill their earthen vessels, and reveal by their means the excellency of that power which is of God! Lord, who am I, that any children of mine should be thus highly honoured of thee? That thou shouldest not only fill their basket and store with earthly good, but fill their hearts with thy grace and love! My eldest son's wife has been called to undergo a very painful operation: her sufferings have been very great; but the Divine support and consolation granted her, has been much greater. God has done great things for her. My soul rejoices with her.—My eldest daughter has received an address from a true servant of Christ in the ministry. I hope the matter is of the Lord: O may his directing hand more evidently appear! Lord, shew us thy way; and let the cloudy pillar, as before, direct our every step!—And now Lord, entering on another year, I commend myself, my family, and my charge to thee. Whether I shall be permitted to see the close of the year in the body, or what events may attend me, I am not solicitous to know; only let me see thy glory on my soul, on my family, on all the villages where thy Gospel is or may be preached, in the missionary circuit with which I am connected! on my flock, and on all the church of God! O let my sun shine with increased brightness, and at last set in smiles! Amen, and amen.

1800.

Dec. 14.—On Monday evening I went to preach the Gospel at Warlingham. In walking with a friend across the common, by slipping my foot, I got a strain in my knee. It is to me a pleasant reflection, that this painful circumstance befel me, when I was about my Master's business. Shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil? It was a token of particular kindness, that Providence had at that time furnished me with a companion, by whose assistance my affliction and suffering were much relieved.

I am now the prisoner of the Lord; and my soul would quietly wait his pleasure, and with full resignation say, "Let him do with me as seemeth good unto him." Indeed, after having been led many years in the wilderness, and exercised with many cares and conflicts, he has brought me into a chamber of sweet repose, and hath given me to find that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." He has taught me to say, "We who have believed, do enter into rest." He has been pleased to take care of my family, and to set my house in order for me; and he has provided for most of my children, and is opening prospects for the comfortable settlement of the rest of them. My eldest daughter expects soon to be united to one, who is a chosen servant

be alone from him! Lord, render me ever faithful, and let thy grace be ever sufficient for me!

1802.

Dec. 14.—This year has been attended with various family cares. My eldest son has been visited with a very alarming interruption of his bodily health, so as to render a total absence from business necessary for several months. The cloud has hovered over us with a very frowning aspect for a long season; though at length, blessed be God, some cheering rays appeared. "With the Lord there is mercy;" and though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion "according to the multitude of his mercies." Providence directed his return home by sea, and sickness, in a voyage unusually rapid, proved remarkably beneficial. Blessed be the "Lord that healeth!" I feared that a worm had been prepared to destroy the favourite gourd; but the eye of the Lord was upon it for good, and God's ways are all judgment. If it be for his glory and our good, that promise shall apply to the frail body, as well as the precious soul, "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day!"

My second daughter was this year united to Mr. N——, married, I trust, (also) in the Lord. We resigned them at parting into the hands of a covenant God with the best blessing *our* affectionate heart could implore. They may have to encounter

many evils in the world: "Father, keep them" in every perplexity: shew them the way wherein they should go, and supply all their need according to thy riches in glory by Christ Jesus! And now my dear children are no more with me, God I trust has given them all a place in his family, and taken them all under his special care, while I and my dear fellow-traveller are left to tread a solitary path; yet not alone, for the Father is with us. We have the pleasure of hearing of our dear children as walking in the truth, the abundant recompence of parental care, and the fruit of the Divine blessing on our affectionate endeavours for their good. Six new plantations are now formed; and, thanks be to God, the plentiful dew of his blessing is upon them. Truly they *are* blessed, and are made blessings; and what shall I render to the Lord for all his goodness conferred upon me! It is indeed great goodness, it is satisfying goodness, it is goodness that furnishes a continued feast! And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee. It is indeed yet called "to day;" health, and strength, and opportunity, and a prepared mind are given me; and fain would I improve the beams of the sun while it shines. But still I would charge my soul to be in readiness to obey the summons, at whatever hour my Lord shall call.

Appearances are still discouraging in my particular charge. Providence is removing one family after another; and many have been taken away by death.

Indeed such information has been so frequent lately, that I have sometimes thought, whether Providence, by these frequent removals, had not such a voice in it as this, "Arise and depart, &c." Yet when I think of the opportunity given me of labouring in the villages, and of the blessing of God on my labours, I feel constrained to continue where God hath appointed, and in many respects hath prospered, the work of my hands. But "here I am, let Him do with me as seemeth good unto Him." Truly my work is hard, but it is the work that God has given me to do, and his grace can make it easy. He knows also how to make it contribute to his glory and my advantage. It is an arduous commission; and I am sometimes ready, with a fainting spirit, to cry, "O Lord, how long!" But my dear Master drank deep of this cup before me, and many of his faithful servants have received it at his hands; why should I complain? Blessed be his Name for a willing mind, and a heart that desires to serve him; and to grieve over those who will not believe, nor even hear his Gospel.

1803.

Oct. 5, will ever be remembered by me as a day of special deliverance. I had preached on Monday at C——, on Tuesday at H——; and returning on Wednesday morning, before I left H——y heath I met a farmer, a stranger to me, from the neighbourhood of D——. After answering an inquiry

relating to the road, with which he was not acquainted; and finding that he was going to S——, where I was also going, we proceeded together. Little did I think that he was directed there, at that time, as a special messenger of God's providence, to be my deliverer; but so it proved. As I wished to reach home as soon as possible, and he was not in haste, he felt inclined, as he afterwards told me, to let me go on before him: but God was pleased to prevent this. Some serious remarks were made; and though he seemed not to know the peculiarities of the Gospel, his mind was under a serious bias. I soon learned that he had lately lost a son about nineteen years of age. Conversation became interesting: how far beneficial, is unknown. When we had almost crossed the Downs, my horse fell entirely down, and all my endeavours to disentangle my foot were ineffectual. In this perilous situation, the horse, rising, trod full on my hand. My left foot was still fast in the stirrup; nor would it have been in my power to extricate it, had it not been for the assistance of my fellow-traveller. But, providentially, the horse, which was apt to take fright, standing entirely still, my fellow-traveller came forward, and, turning my foot, released it, and was very kind in his attention to me afterwards. The God who sent his angel to release Peter from his chains and prison, sent that man to rescue my foot from that snare, and my life from death. Blessed, for ever blessed, be his Name! I proceeded in the

company of this man to S——, to a friend's house, who applied ointment to my hand. My hand, my foot, my life, my all, grace helping me, shall be more than ever the Lord's.—Amen, and amen.

Dec. 14.—What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits; his benefits so great and multiplied through every period of my life, every year, and every day; and to me, who am less than the least of all saints, and unworthy of the least of all his mercies! O Lord, by thee have I been holden up from my infancy and youth. Thine hand has conducted me in many a season of perplexity and danger: in many ways, very different from mine expectations, thou hast supplied my wants and relieved my cares. Often hast thou rebuked my carnal dependence, taken away my creature supports, frowned on my creature prospects, and caused me to walk in darkness and see no light, and then in precious accents said, "*Be still*, and know that I am God." Thou hast often tried my faith, but never suffered my faith to fail. Thou hast strengthened me with strength in my soul to wait for the grant of needed mercies, and that mercy has been granted in a way very different from expectation. Thou hast prevented me with the blessings of thy goodness, and mingled much sweetness in my cup, in the discoveries of the love of thine heart and the operation of thine hand. O how great the love and mercy which God has manifested unto me! For some years he has favoured

me with an unusual measure of bodily health, and, blessed be his Name, not a small measure of inward peace. In family mercies he has abounded towards me, and given me all my heart's desire. In creature fellowship also, he has given me many a refreshing stream: and he has given me to taste in my own mind, also, the sweetness of his promises, manifesting himself unto me as he does not unto the world. Sometimes he has condescended to bring me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me has been love; and this, I can clearly discover, is his gracious design in many an event that relates to me. All the measures of Providence concerning me have been wisely and graciously designed, to direct my heart into his love, and to bring me to live by faith on his promises. I have been one while flattered with creature smiles, and then been made to find my expectations vain. I have been threatened with creature frowns, but the blast of the terrible ones has been like a storm against a wall; terrible to see and hear, but no injury was sustained. In a sovereign way God has rescued me from the world, carried me above it, borne me as the unfledged bird on the wings of his omnipotence, and brought me out of the reach of evil, near to himself. How much of his wisdom, his grace, his power, and his truth, have I to review! Truly the Lord is good: how much has he granted me! I seem to myself placed in an earthly paradise: and while I see one favourite plant withered

or removed, blessed be his Name, he is pleased to enable me to make up the want of it *in himself*. His mercy and condescension have abounded as creature comforts have failed. In one particular instance, I have lately met with painful disappointment, and in it I have seen most clearly the vanity of the creature: it has led my soul to wait only upon God; who, blessed be his Name, has not withheld the manifestations of his love.

In other respects, I have found the uncertainty of creature friendship; but, Lord, "whom have I on earth but thee?" O that I could serve thee with more singleness of heart, and with increased fervour! Blessed be his Name, he hath enlarged my heart, and made me willing to "endure hardness" in his service. I have not consulted with flesh and blood: his service is truly my delight, and it is made the more pleasant to me, by what I experience of his presence with me. My soul is often made joyful in the work he assigns me; and often have I been led to conclude from what I find in my own soul, that, amidst all discouraging appearances, there is good done which I am not particularly acquainted with. Blessed be his Name, that some of his own children are fed; and there is some shaking among the dry bones; and if but one soul be saved in the Lord, through the ministry of the least of his servants, why should I complain? The will of the Lord be done! Amen.

1804.

Dec. 14.—Another revolving year have I passed here below; a year crowned with mercies. Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast wrought for me! Vanity I have found inscribed on the creature in various instances to which my expectations have been directed; but *thou* hast far exceeded my most sanguine hopes: and while my expectations have been exceeded, my fears have been disappointed: "not one thing has failed of all that thou the Lord hast promised." All my dear children I see provided for as to this life, and choosing that better part which can never be taken from them; united in the dearest earthly bonds with those who fear God; pursuing together a better country, even an heavenly. Thus He is also making me to rejoice in hope. Often has it been the grief of my heart, that I could render no more unto the Lord. O to feel my soul more alive and fervent, more sincere, upright, and determined; but alas, my divided heart! When shall my dearest affections centre wholly in God? I have had my conflicts; and sometimes my heart has bled, and I have cried, I know not what to do! "but mine eyes are up unto Thee."

Once and again the Lord hath girded me with strength unto the battle, and bid me not be afraid. Well I remember one particular time of distressful anxiety, when, by means of a dream, the Lord "strengthened me with strength in my soul." In my

multiplied beyond what, to human apprehension, was ever probable; but oh, my mercies! they are more than can be numbered! They are great beyond expression: they are not only dropped down from the hand of God; they proceed, I trust, from his heart of love: they are the fruits of his purpose and grace from all eternity: they are springs of fresh consolation here, and pledges of joys unbounded and eternal! Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that "thou hast brought me hitherto?" A comfortable measure of bodily health, the pleasures of friendship, and every needful earthly good provided for me and mine! These are no inconsiderable mercies: but a good hope, through grace, of eternal salvation, respecting myself, my dear partner, and all my dear children; these are mercies indeed! "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Saviour!" "Truly, O Lord, thou hast done well for thy servant, according to thy word." I asked wisdom for myself and mine, and thou hast given it me, even long life for evermore. It is now many years since I embraced thy promises, I trust, with my whole heart; and those promises have not been like a deceitful brook unto me. No: they have been a refreshing and never-failing spring: they have been my shield and buckler. In the darkness of affliction, they have been my cheering lamp and my supporting staff; my faithful companion, and my song: and sometimes, in prosperity, they have added a sweetness of assurance to

all my creature enjoyments, and shone upon me with a brightness that exceeds the utmost glory of the world. And now, blessed be God, full of days, full of experience, and full of hopes, I seem to feel as the Israelite of old, appearing before the Lord with the joy of salvation in his heart, and the basket of first fruits on his head. His heart, no doubt, was often warmed with gratitude and love, when he stood and said: "I profess before the Lord, that I am come into the land which the Lord our God promised to our fathers." I trust God has been pleased to furnish me also with first fruits; the first fruits of the Spirit in my own soul, and in the souls of those who are very near and dear to me. I would stand ready with a mind prepared to present myself and my all a willing sacrifice unto the Lord, and gratefully acknowledge and profess I am come to the land of promise, and my dear family with me; and it is a goodly heritage. Lord, thou hast graciously remembered me and mine with the favour that thou bearest to thy people! Oh! it is mercy; it is great mercy! What shall a poor worthless creature say?

Thy favours, Lord, surprise my soul.

O to be bound fast, and to be for ever bound, to thee and to thy service! O to be more alive for God! to be emptied of sin, of self, of the world; and to have every power alive to thee, and every desire at rest in thee!—Blessed be God! I hope he

has been pleased to give unto us the appearance of revival. Six have lately been added to our church: four of them in full communion; *two* only occasional. My soul would praise the Lord, and not forget any of his benefits.

I have now begun another year: perhaps it may be my dying year. However this may be, the Lord help me to work while it is called to-day! My heart's desire and prayer is, that when my Master shall come, he may find me so doing.

1806.

Dec. 14.—I have now the mercies of another year to review, and truly the Lord hath abounded towards me in mercy this year also. The God of my salvation hath kept my faith and hope alive; given desires to serve him, however feebly, yet in simplicity and godly sincerity. He hath awakened in me more than ever a fear of my own heart, and made me watchful against seeking my own things, when professing to seek the things of Christ my Lord. Alas! my deceitful heart! What unworthy principles and ends are often found to influence its measures! The more careful my search and observation, the greater reason I find to abhor myself, "and repent in dust and ashes." Lord! purify my heart by faith: abolish this idol self; that first born of the seed of the serpent in my soul; that Goliah which has so long defied the armies of the living God! Captain of my salvation, thou anointed Chief, thine is the

power! Enter the field, reveal thine arm, and bruise the serpent's head! O when shall I have one heart, have all my desires to point to one end, and all my labours influenced by one commanding principle! Well; as far as I know my own heart, if it be the pleasure of my Lord, I would be saved from this idol self, even so as by *fire*: it is my desire and prayer that He would sit as a refiner, until the dross and tin be purged away.

Blessed be God for family mercies this year! I have still to rejoice over my dear children: they are blessed and made blessings! Blessed be God! my pastoral charge presents an encouraging appearance. Some additions have been made to the church. A lady, on a visit at a school, while I was addressing the children, though before an entire stranger to Religion, appears to have felt the power of Divine truth, and is become, I believe, an attentive hearer of the Gospel. O Lord, let this dropping introduce a plentiful shower of blessings! Into thy hands I now commend my life and my dear connections. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!

1807.

Dec. 14.—The revolution of another year is completed. My years are fast multiplying: at the age of sixty-two, I cannot but regard the time of my departure as near at hand. Blessed be God for continued health and strength for labour, and for

a heart constrained by the love of Christ, and made willing to labour, and I trust to suffer, as my great Master shall appoint! Blessed be his Name, he has not sent me to warfare at my own charges! I have not been called to labour unassisted and alone. His presence, his blessing, his influence, have made my work to be my wages. Faith and patience have been called to many a painful trial; but he has not been a wilderness to me, a land of drought: his rod and his staff, his mercy and his truth, have still relieved the burden of affliction, rebuked my fears, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.

The sins which brought a devouring scourge on the inhabitants of the old world, and brought down a storm of furious vengeance on the cities of the plain, seem to characterise the inhabitants of our favoured country. Yet, blessed be God, there is hope concerning this thing. We have a praying remnant. We have our seven thousand, who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Some, I trust, we have, who have power with God: O that they were more! It is, indeed, a day of profession! It is a day, wherein a great deal of zeal for the Gospel is expressed, in outward devotion and liberal expenditure; but comparatively few appear richly endued with the Spirit of grace and supplication. Lord! when wilt thou pour down thy Spirit on British ministers and churches? When wilt thou unite them, and make them full of the Holy Ghost and of faith? When wilt thou subdue

the hearts of the impenitent, and bring prodigals and strangers home? Our sins and our slumbers are discouraging to our hopes: yet, there is forgiveness with thee, that Thou mightest be feared! Blot out our transgressions for thy name's sake; and exalt the glory of thy grace, in saving a people who deserve nothing but thy wrath! Whatever be the issue of the present conflict, in respect of our nation, let the Throne of our Redeemer be exalted, and his kingdom grow! Oh! let me and mine, and all that put their trust in Thee, have a covert in thine infinite perfections and everlasting love!

Blessed be God, for abounding mercy shewn to my dear family, over whom I can rejoice as richly blessed and made blessings! He has put great honour on most of them. He has been, and will be, I trust, a Father and a Saviour to them all.

The war, now commenced with Russia, threatens great disadvantage; but the Lord sitteth above the floods, and he will perform all things for us. I would enter the ark with all my dear family, and make his promised all-sufficiency my refuge and defence. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

Among the people of my ministerial charge, the Spirit is abundantly manifest; the number of hearers is increased, and more seriousness is very generally evident among them. A very encouraging change has, for some time past, appeared in one of our

young friends. From an extreme devotedness to the vanities of the world, she has come out from the vain and trifling, and is separate: she seems to be an earnest inquirer after salvation, and devoted in a remarkable degree to the instruction of poor children in our Sunday school. May the Lord carry on and perfect what seems to be his own work! In our villages, likewise, we have seen much of the Divine favour and blessing. Lord, leave us not! Whatever discouraging circumstances we have to lament, whatever perilous times we have to apprehend, O bring me, my dear family, my ministerial charge, and all thy people near to thyself, and provide for us a hiding place! Amen.

1808.

Dec. 14.—I have now to review a year signalized in a remarkable manner by the mercy and goodness of God. No bodily illness has once interrupted my public labours; and I hope not my body only, but my soul, hath prospered and been in health. Truly, my work has been my delight, and I have felt not a little solicitude, that my heart should be upright before the Lord therein. But alas, how often does my treacherous heart deceive me! Appearances are sometimes fair, as if its direction were simply to the glory of God; yet, at the very time, I find it dissembling, and turning aside to a point which I should be ashamed to acknowledge. Lord, make my soul sincere!

A hint was lately given me in a dream, which I received as by the mouth of some kind messenger of my great Master. I was slumbering, but blessed angels were awake around me. I had lately delivered a charge at an ordination at Croydon, another on a similar occasion at Kingston, and was preparing a third for the designation of an itinerant at Godalming. On the morning of the day on which this third charge was to be delivered, I was roused from sleep by the sound of my own voice uttering aloud, "The man who lies the lowest at the feet of his Great Master, shall be recompensed by him with the greatest honours." It acted as a reprover. I suspected I had been too much pleased with what I had prepared for the solemn occasion. I was not possessed of sufficient courage to lay it aside, but determined to commit myself more fully than ever to the influence of the Spirit of God, from which I reaped abundant satisfaction in my exercise that day.

It is, I trust, my earnest desire to serve the Lord with my spirit, in simplicity and godly sincerity. But, alas! my deceitful heart! it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It often grieves the Holy Spirit; and robs me of the choicest comforts, the highest honours, the richest communications of Divine love! And what is worse than all, it robs my Saviour of the honour that is due to him alone! as if it were not the joy of my heart to see him wear the crown. Ah! how little have re-

bukes and resolutions availed! Pride is an evil that lies deep in my very nature. Often I have been reconciled to the most painful operations, still yielding myself to the means of effecting a cure; but how soon the evil returns! Saviour, thy power display, and with thy stripes let me be healed!

My heart has been prepared to rejoice in the appearance of a revival in the Church and Congregation. Since the re-establishment of the Sunday school, two additional galleries have been built. The school now consists of one hundred and twenty children. There is also a school of industry, consisting of twenty-five girls, and instructed with great attention. The Congregation also much increases. Miss E. and Miss W. have been received into the Church, and several others seem lately to have their faces turned Zionwards; insomuch, that, although we have lost several families of the opulent, there seems to be more of the real spirit and power of religion than I have witnessed or heard of in this place before. The Lord be praised! He hath not withheld the return of prayer, nor shall any who hope in Him be ashamed.

My dear friend Mrs. L— has been some months with us, languishing under great bodily suffering, and distressful darkness of mind: no prospect of recovery, no sensible comfort, nor one hope beyond the grave! Yet, there is some reason to hope concerning her, and the supporting influence of that hope she evidently feels, and is often in a degree relieved

by conversation. O to see this gloomy night pass away, and the day return! I trust the Lord God of truth will appear in his glory before she "go hence."

Blessed be God, that, amidst all the clouds which hover around our nation, we are not without a token for good. The Gospel of Salvation is by far more extensively preached in the land than ever, and in many places preached with unusual success. Divine influence remarkably appears on the minds of the young, and many are made willing to follow Christ. Very many exertions are made to carry the Gospel into dark places, at home and abroad. It appears that God is with us of a truth; and from this favoured country, His word is going forth into distant lands. Thus, while he shakes the nations abroad, he is exciting very many at home to aid his great design of gathering subjects into the kingdom of the Redeemer. This encourages hope, that, while thrones and kingdoms are falling beneath the arm of his righteous judgments, his guardian wing will shield our favoured country from the approach of evil.

Blessed be God! no breach has been lately made in our family, and God abounds in the bestowment of his mercies. Our dear children, in their several households, are in the enjoyment of his great goodness; and those engaged in the ministry of the Gospel are rejoicing in the presence and blessing of their Great Master. Thus far the Lord hath

led me on: his mercy and truth are my constant companions. I know he will not fail me nor forsake me. Therefore, where he goes, *I will go!* He will not fail to search out for me a resting-place at last, and therefore He shall be my hope and my joy by the way. "Into thy hands I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!"—*James Bowden.*

1809.

Dec. 14.—The year I have now to review has been rendered remarkable by some very gracious, and even surprising, dispensations. God hath appeared in his glory, and shewn me greater things than I had before seen. The year commenced with the admission into the Church of *my dear friend* Mrs. C—, a child of many prayers. Her godly parents were not, however, favoured with seeing the return of their prayers while on this side heaven. God, in his wisdom, intended, in the circumstances of her conversion, to give an affecting discovery of the glory of his Name. Therefore, when he saw her wanderings, he was pleased to permit them, and suffer her to go forward in the way she had chosen, until the *time*, the set time, to favour her was come. Conscience, however, was not suffered to slumber. A sense of duty, the abiding effect of a religious education, often produced conviction: the blessed Spirit often carried home the plain and faithful address of the word preached to her mind. For a

considerable time, I found her without rest; not able to make a determined stand against the power of temptation; and yet deeply wounded by the word. A spirit of grace and supplication was at length given her. The Lord God of truth heard her prayer, and remembered his covenant. He saw her oppressed, and undertook for her. She was made willing in the day of God's power; and having subscribed with her own hand unto the Lord, she has hitherto shewn, that she entered into his covenant with all her heart and with all her soul.

This year has also been signalized by the admission of several others to the Church. Mr. and Mrs. R——, were brought to be hearers. In great mercy the Lord was pleased to prepare their hearts to embrace the word of life. They were received into the Church three months since, and promise to be very useful members of our favoured society. May the Lord yet be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us! Our dear young friend Miss B—— has been also admitted into the Church: her sister also appears to have been made a subject of the grace of God. These dear children my soul rejoices over with exceeding joy. I saw the days of their early youth spent in the extreme of vanity: but when heedless of instruction. God was pleased to visit them with affliction, and thereby opened their ears to discipline. He saw their ways, and hath healed them. These are delightful manifestations of the Divine presence and

power.—This year has been especially marked as a year of the right hand of the Most High, in the wonderful deliverance granted to my friend Mrs. L——. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Thus has the Lord been pleased to crown this year with his loving kindness. Lord, grant me still to see thy power and glory, so as "*I have* seen thee in the sanctuary!" Let future years declare, thou art not towards us as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry but for a night; but that thou art come to dwell with us, and to delight over us to do us good. Even so, amen!—*James Bowden.*

1810.

Dec. 14.—Another year opens before me, and the year that is past I must review with various emotions. It was certainly a year of great and special mercy in many respects. My bodily health has been very little interrupted, and no breach by death has been made in my family. Outward comforts have abounded, the blessing of the Lord hath attended my ministry, and I have enjoyed much delightful enlargement, at times, in the service of my Lord and Saviour. Never, I believe, had there been a period wherein the power and glory of the Lord were beheld in so many works of grace in this sanctuary. Prayer was remarkably answered in the case of my friend Mrs. L——: but lest I should be exalted above measure, there has been given me

a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet me. One severe trial after another has followed in quick succession. Repeated words and acts of unkindness from those I love, wound my spirits, and even pierce my very heart. My dear partner, through trouble of mind, is suffering, in a great degree, the gradual loss of sight, attended with great debility in the whole nervous system. Yet, blessed be God, he still enables me to possess my soul in patience: and yet the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee," has not, will not fail. —*James Bowden.*

1812.

March 6.—This evening, a church meeting being appointed for some purpose unknown to me, I have sent another letter directed to the deacon, Mr. ——. In this I have signified, that my opinion, before expressed, of the will of my Great Master, had received confirmation, and that I should relinquish the pastoral charge at the approaching quarter. It was with great *pain* that my mind was brought to this. But it appears to me, and to all my friends, that I could do no otherwise. I shall then very nearly have completed thirty-six years in the ministry at T——, which commenced the first Sabbath in May, 1776. During these many years, I have seen many and great mercies,—personal mercies, family mercies, and mercies attending my ministry. At the close, a *distressing* storm has been suffered to

arise; during which, singular supports and consolations have been granted me: my ability for ministerial work has suffered no decline, but a painful combination of circumstances has constrained my retiring. This is to me a painful necessity; but shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil? Sometimes I fear, lest there should be found marks of displeasure in this dispensation: yet my soul has been truly brought very low, and very near to God, by these trials; and I have been encouraged to reason, if God had been determined to put me away in anger, he "would not have shewn me such things as these." I trust this is the will of God concerning me, even my sanctification. Lord, "not my will, but thine be done!" Now, Lord, "what wilt thou have me to do?" If it be his pleasure, He will again shew me an open door to the service of the sanctuary. But if He say thus, "I have no pleasure in thee," here am I, "let him do with me as seemeth good unto him!"

Behold thy waiting servant, Lord,
Devoted to thy fear;
Remember and confirm thy word,
For all my hopes are there.

THUS concludes the last devotional manuscript of this truly devoted servant of the Lord. Though at the time when he wrote it, he felt himself unusually well, and appeared evidently expecting and waiting for opportunity of renewed exertion in that cause which to the last lay near his heart, the favoured crisis which witnessed his removal from the field of labour, and his triumphant entry into the joy of his Lord, was just at hand.

Having resigned his charge at Tooting, he had engaged, on the fifth of April following, to preach at Hammersmith. The greater part of the Saturday preceding he spent in his study, and, on the Sabbath morning, was observed to be very importunate, both in family devotion, and when supplicating the Divine blessing at the breakfast table, that the presence of God might be especially experienced that day.

Before he took leave of his beloved partner, he observed to her, that he found his nerves rather unusually shaken. He arrived, however, at Hammersmith in tolerable spirits, and began the service. In the time of prayer, many in the congregation noticed his peculiar fervour and heavenly-mindedness. After prayer, he read the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and before sermon, by his direction, the 131st Psalm was sung—a Psalm peculiarly expressive of the temper of his mind in this hour of his distress and trouble:—

Is there ambition in my heart?
  Search, gracious God, and see.
Or do I act a haughty part?
  Lord, I appeal to thee.

I charge my thoughts, Be humble still,
  And all my carriage mild;
Content, my Father, with thy will,
  And quiet as a child.

The patient soul, the lowly mind,
  Shall have a large reward;
Let saints in sorrow lie resign'd,
  And trust a faithful Lord.

He joined in singing this Psalm with such remarkable solemnity and ardour as deeply affected many present. Then mentioning for his text, James iv. 7, "Submit yourselves therefore unto God," he proposed to treat of submission, with respect to the understanding, the will, and the affections. Having illustrated the two former, while entering on the latter, his voice faltered, and, sinking on the left side, under the influence of a strong paralytic affection, he was supported only by the pulpit. Assistance being immediately procured, he was conveyed to the vestry, where he was bled, and recovered so far as to be partly sensible of his condition. But, before he could reach a friend's house in the neighbourhood, whither he was carried with all convenient speed, this was followed by an apoplectic attack, and a stupor, from which he never recovered.

At two o'clock next morning, Monday the 6th of April, he breathed his last.

Thus, after having long shone as a star of bright and steady lustre in the firmament of the church, and of the world, it pleased God to command his sudden elevation to a nobler sphere,—there to shine forth with unsullied lustre, ineffable effulgence, and eternal glory! How truly honourable, how desirable, the transition! to be removed immediately, and almost imperceptibly, from the services of the sanctuary on earth, to those of the temple of God in heaven; where no intruding evil shall be permitted again to interrupt his joy or break the universal harmony for ever!

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let "my latter end be *like his!*"

A

FATHERLY ADDRESS;

DESIGNED AS A

LEGACY TO HIS FAMILY.

A

FATHERLY ADDRESS.

PREFACE.

A FEW days previous to the close of the past year, the Author, in one of his missionary excursions, found his thoughts particularly arrested. Musing on the circumstance of a new year in its near approach, his mind quickly embraced the subject of the following Address. He soon found enough in the survey of the love of God, to make his meditation sweet. His family were present to his thoughts; and having something like "boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus," he took them with him. The exercise of prayer suggested the thought of a Fatherly Address. He rejoiced over them with great joy; and determined on opening his heart unto them, as he had been pouring it out to God for them. And should it please the "everlasting Father" to honour this

Address, as the mean of promoting in his family the advantages of fervent piety, and of causing the light of the Christian character to shine with increasing brightness, he will have to recollect with gratitude the 28th of December, when time shall be no more.

"Keep yourselves in the Love of God."

MY DEARLY BELOVED CHILDREN,

YOUR tenderly loving father wishes to accompany your entrance on another year, with some affectionate hints. The love of God is my theme. Charming theme! what a mercy to know any thing experimentally of the love of God, to partake of its benefits, and to be governed by its sweet constraints! The subject divides itself into two parts;—the love of God to man, a sinner,—and the love of sinful man to God. The one rises out of the other; for we love him, because he first loved us.

The love of God to man, a sinner: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Strange and mysterious truth! It is the joy and the wonder of angels. Man, who is but dust and ashes; man, who has broken the law of his Creator, and whose very nature is sin; man, universally, is comprehended in the expressions and provisions of

God's everlasting love: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should have everlasting life."

This is God's love of benevolence: but Divine love discriminates. God regards many of our fellow-creatures with special love: he beholds them with complacency and delight; he admits them into his presence; they have fellowship with him as their friend; he bears them in his arms as his dear children; he is a God unto them; with infinite tenderness he rejoices over them, and says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

Happy, happy state! How changed their lot! They were estranged from God, having no hope, and without God in the world, enemies against God by wicked works, the willing servants of sin. Nay, they were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin: "they had been transgressors from the womb," and were "by nature children of wrath, even as others." And what can be imagined more terrible? Who, that feels any thing of the terrors of the world to come, would not rather die a thousand deaths than that the wrath of God should abide upon him?

Whence, then, is this surprising change? How comes it to pass, that any of the sinful children of men are regarded of God with complacency and delight? I answer: As the effect is wonderful, so is the cause. There is a *first moving*, a *great im-*

pulsive cause; and that is to be traced to the purpose and grace, the gracious loving heart, of God before the world was. Remember this: they were chosen in Christ. Come, let me stand in the cleft of the rock; and while I am entertained with the fruits and assurances of unchanging love, let me think of the terrors with which inexorable justice for my sins pierced and rent his loving heart. While nothing but love is mingled in *my* cup, let me remember with what agonies he drunk for me a cup of fury, to the very dregs. And what had the sufferings and the righteousness of my dying Lord, been to me, and what had I been the better for the everlasting love of God, had it not been for *thee, thou blessed Spirit*—for thy sovereign efficacious work on my soul? What had the light of the glorious Gospel, or the trumpet of salvation, been to me, hadst not thou condescended to shine into my heart? Others might have been entertained, but the sweet strains of Divine love had never been melody in my ears: the Sun of righteousness might have risen gloriously on others, but had never brought healing in his wing to my soul. I should have remained an unbeliever still; my wretched heart a rock of ice still. My affections, spiritually motionless and cold as death, had never moved at the tenderest expostulations of a Saviour's love, hadst not thou, in thine infinite mercy, stood before my unbelieving heart, an advocate for Jesus, and with irresistible energy and sweetness

said, "Come now, and let us reason together!" Then did my sin appear exceeding sinful. I was "concerned, self-condemned, and ready to perish," when the veil which so long had hid my Saviour's face, was removed. In thy light I "beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." I saw and believed:—"My Lord and my God!" I cried, wondering that I had not believed before. Precious faith! under the influence of which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the love of God was no longer general; it was found to be special, discriminating, and everlasting. It was like a burning glass placed between the love of God and my soul: it collected and concentrated the celestial rays, and thereby wrought effectually. I was turned "from darkness to light," and from death to life; the rock of ice began to melt in grief and tears. I began to feel peace and joy in believing. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me." He brought me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love!

> Here, ev'ry bowel of our God
> With soft compassion rolls:
> Here, peace and pardon, bought with blood,
> Is food for dying souls!

O happy day! when the communication is opened between the everlasting love of God and the heart of a sinful man; when eternal Love not only speaks for him but in him; when the spring

that had been obscured and hidden, flowing, as it were, under ground, breaks up and shews itself in effectual calling, and in all the fruits of the Spirit; when the precious soul, which had long been in fetters, like a captive in a dark and miserable dungeon, hears and revives at the sweet sound of salvation; is brought into the light of the glorious Gospel, and the liberty of the children of God. Now, what joy that assurance brings! "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Now the blessing comes, the fountain flows, and love, and nothing but love, proceeds from the throne of God. The captive released drinks, yea, drinks abundantly. His affections are warmed; he is satisfied with fatness; the vessel fills and overflows. Come unto me, he cries, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul! Divine love finds a thousand vehicles to communicate from its fulness. Precious truths, and promises, and ordinances, are fraught with its gifts. Providence dispatches a host of smiling messengers: nay, and clouds and storms, which, with all the grief and shame they bring, are laden with salvation, in plentiful showers drop down fatness! Divine love converts every thing that befals a converted sinner into that which is more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Oh happy life of the Christian! while he regardeth not iniquity in his heart, and

the love of God, obstructed by no unholy temper, richly pours into it divine consolation.

"Enoch walked with God;" Abraham was called the friend of God; they often sojourned at the very gate of heaven. And "being justified by faith, we also have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom, also, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" "and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." What is all the world without the love of God! What is creature friendship when not sanctified by the love of God!—It is a brook in summer, which disappoints and reproaches in the moment of distressfulness. It is a broken reed: you lean upon it to your wounding. But how excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! "They shall not be ashamed that wait upon thee." "The peace of God passeth all understanding!" It proceeds from a Sun that never needs the help of a star to create a day: a Sun that loses nothing by dispensing abundantly, and, amidst interposing clouds and tempests, remains an eternal source of exceeding joy. "Your joy no man taketh from you."

Yet, for the most part, how little do we know, how small a part do we here comprehend, of the breadth and length, the depth and heighth, of the unmeasureable, everlasting love of Christ! In heaven

we shall have enlarged capacities and brighter manifestations." Jesus, who "speaks as never man spake," will undertake to open to us the mysteries of Divine Love: the eyes of all will be fastened upon him, and all will bear him witness, wondering at the gracious words which shall proceed out of his mouth." "The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead them unto fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." In quick succession, one delightful lecture will succeed another; one burst of joy and praise will follow another: still new discoveries, new delights. The preacher always divinely eloquent, the hearers never tired; their minds lost in wonder and in joy; their notes of praise rising higher and higher; the grandeur of the subject increasing with their capacity of knowing and enjoying it.

Be this, my dear children, your portion. It is the "goodly heritage" of all who fear God. I reflect with pleasure on the circumstances which attended your entrance on life: how the love of God presented you with an exceeding great and precious promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." What a sweet assurance, an abundant grant! It is the charter of our Zion; it is the inheritance of every one that is born in her; it is the birth-right of believers and their infant seed. When you could not act for yourselves, your parents, with tender love, entered your names in the register of Zion,

[illegible] grace. Then have I re-[illegible] the promise [illegible] accepted, and [illegible] [illegible]. For we had sworn [illegible] with all our soul, and He was [illegible] [illegible] have to render, or can to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. But under-[illegible], [illegible] the promise [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], the birth-[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] with the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the measures of sin [illegible] [illegible] of Christ [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] "Egypt," of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] for you, and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and what can I [illegible] [illegible] great mercy? The Lord has given me my heart's desire, and has [illegible] [illegible] expressed in my lips. I must gain a [illegible] before I can hope to raise a note, high as the gratitude my soul would express. However, while I can open my heart to you, my dear children, I will be in this one affectionate and important counsel—"Keep yourselves in the love of God." Be very watchful, lest any thing occur to interrupt the communications of Divine Love to your souls. Their sorrows are sorrows indeed, who are lamenting after him whom their soul loveth: for "his loving kindness is better than life." "Let their money [illegible]ish with them," (cried the noble Marquis of [illegible]ico, while laying his dearest earthly comforts and

his life on the altar of God): "let their money perish with them, who think all the treasures of the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ."

But let us not mistake the mind of the Spirit in this admonition. It is not intended to encourage a doubt of the constancy and perpetuity of the special love of God manifested in effectual calling. "No," says Paul, when animated by that Spirit to holy triumph; "for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God's love of complacency is everlasting love: "I am the Lord, I change not: therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

If it be objected, Though God change not, we may change, and God's immutability be our terror; blessed be the Name of our great Mediator, in regard of the final salvation of genuine believers, the objection has no force. For Divine Love finds its meritorious cause not in the saved sinner, but in the Lord our Righteousness. Mark the language of Paul; "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" and observe the illustration of the same precious truth in the 89th Psalm: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their trans-

and believingly craved the grace. Often have I rejoiced in recollecting the promise then accepted, and the engagement solemnly ratified; for we had sworn with all our heart and with all our soul, and HE was found of us. Now "I have no greater joy, than to see my children walking in the truth;" not undervaluing, but embracing, the promise; not bartering away, but earnestly seeking and securing, the birthright; "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," of the world itself. Happy resolve! happy for you, and happy for me! What can I say, and what can I do, as a fit acknowledgment of this great mercy? The Lord has given me my heart's desire, and has not witholden the request of my lips. I must gain a celestial harp before I can hope to raise a note, high as the gratitude my soul would express. However, while I can open my heart to you, my dear children, it will be in this one affectionate and important counsel—"Keep yourselves in the love of God." Be very watchful, lest any thing occur to interrupt the communications of Divine Love to your souls. Their sorrows are sorrows indeed, who are lamenting after him whom their soul loveth: for "his loving kindness is better than life." "Let their money perish with them," (cried the noble Marquis of Vico, while laying his dearest earthly comforts and

his life on the altar of God): "let their money perish with them, who think all the treasures of the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ."

But let us not mistake the mind of the Spirit in this admonition. It is not intended to encourage a doubt of the constancy and perpetuity of the special love of God manifested in effectual calling. "No," says Paul, when animated by that Spirit to holy triumph; "for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God's love of complacency is everlasting love: "I am the Lord, I change not: therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

If it be objected, Though God change not, we may change, and God's immutability be our terror; blessed be the Name of our great Mediator, in regard of the final salvation of genuine believers, the objection has no force. For Divine Love finds its meritorious cause not in the saved sinner, but in the Lord our Righteousness. Mark the language of Paul; "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" and observe the illustration of the same precious truth in the 89th Psalm: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their trans-

spect of the final issue, is not designed to relax, but to encourage and give energy to endeavour. In this view, though I be censured as legal, I am not afraid to exhort with Paul, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;" or, to urge the affectionate counsel of John, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."—"What, therefore, God has joined together, let no man put asunder." Indeed, the ability is not in us: it is in God. He worketh in us, "both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Every command implieth a promise. This the man with the withered arm understood, when, at the command of Christ, he stretched it forth, not doubting but that he would gird it with strength. This Austin well knew, and therefore prayed, "Lord! give me what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt."

But you will expect me to descend to particulars, and to say what means you should employ to secure so glorious an end. Then—

1. Take care that you make Christ your hope, and do him honour as Mediator. Alas, for the vain, however confident, expectations of those who trust in themselves, that they are righteous; and when they would draw nigh to God, have not Christ in their eye and in their heart. Much in religious practice, it is to be feared, is ineffectually done. Many candidates for heaven labour hard, and travel far, yet are not a single step the nearer, because they are not in God's way. There is but one

way by which the love of God cometh down into the hearts of sinful men, and that is Christ Jesus; and if a sinner would draw near to God, it must be by that way. This is "the new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," and we have "boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." Paul well knew this way: he delighted in it, and earnestly recommended it. All the saints have gone this way: they "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There, Everlasting Love, meeting with returning sinners, embraces, enriches, and crowns them with eternal honours. God's love is first to Christ, and then, for his sake, to those that are his. The Israelites were "beloved for the fathers' sakes;" believers more especially for the Saviour's sake: "In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." Never expect to be accepted of God, but "in the Beloved:" never expect that any thing but Christ in you, can be well pleasing in the sight of God. Never expect that any offering of yours shall be regarded with Divine complacency, unless offered on Christ as the altar, by Christ the priest, and performed with the incense of Christ's intercession. There was a time when, convinced of sin, and distressfully alarmed, your trembling spirit fled to lay hold on the hope set before you: you beheld the Lamb of God: you pleaded the infinite merit of his precious blood: your believing soul exulted,

"Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died." Undismayed by the flaming sword in the uplifted hand of Justice, you cried—

> Strike, if thy pure impartial eye
> Can but one simple sin descry,
> Which he who my whole debt did pay,
> Shed not his blood to wash away.

"Surely shall one say, In the Lord, have I righteousness." Then you learned the sweet import of that word, "A man shall be an hiding place from the wind, a covert from the storm, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "As you have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." The manslayer under the Law must not only flee to the city of refuge, but he must there continue during his life or the life of the high priest. My dear children, "whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." If you would be accepted of God, draw nigh, having your heart sprinkled by the blood of Jesus: make use, make great use, of him as Mediator. Make him your Advocate, and give your cause into his hand. If you would rise to God, and be delighted with the utterings of his loving heart, make use of the ladder Jacob saw. Keep your believing eye upon Christ: it is the way to have God's loving eye upon you.

2. Carefully watch against every thing in your temper and practice that would grieve the loving

Spirit of God. We have shewn, that the special love of God is everlasting: it suffers no final rejectment; yet its resentments are quick and severe. It is a tender, and therefore a jealous, love. God's love to man, as his Creator, was great; and when he looked and saw him estranged from him, and delighted with sin, how his soul resented the injury done him! It repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. But the love of God to his people in Christ Jesus, as their Redeemer, is far greater: it is surpassing, unmeasurable, infinite! Its resentments, therefore, will be found much more tender and strong. If a child of God has not to live in the dread of being cast off for ever, yet he is to stand in awe of his frown, his rebuke in distresses, desertion, and controversy, though but for a season. I repeat, therefore: Take heed of grieving the tender love of God:—and here I will descend to several particulars.

Take heed how you neglect or slight the offers of the love of God. It is as much in its nature to dispense its choicest blessings, as in a fountain to pour out its refreshing streams. Its offers are all free, all spontaneous and gratuitous: and they present just what we want. Amazing love! It lays its immense, its everlasting, treasures at our feet. It comes to a sinner's heart, and knocks: it becomes importunate to gain permission to come in and spread a table there with its choicest fruits. "Open thy mouth

wide," it cries to its own children, "and I will fill it." Alas, that such love should ever be resisted, and grieved, and chased away! that it should ever see its offers regarded with a languid cold indifference! Send not away the loving Spirit of God. "Grieve not—quench not the Spirit." Remember how the Church learned by distressful experience what an evil and bitter thing it is to slight the offers of Divine Love.

Again—Be afraid of an unbelieving heart. Take heed how you suffer yourselves to call in question or suspect the truth of those declarations which the Love of God has made. Covenant blessings are ascertained to you, under the joint security of truth and love. In these assurances, your God deserves your confidence; and he will amply reward it. What though creature supplies fail you; though sense afford no aid to your faith; yet why art thou cast down? Was it the creature's arm that gained your confidence? Then it is just in God to cause that arm to wither. But if God was the strength of your heart, and his word the pillar of your hope, why yield to desponding fears, as if God had forgotten to be gracious; as if his promise could fail for evermore? Why trust in God, only when he is *near* in the visible means of relief? "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off!" "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." He shall bring to pass

the fulfilment of his own word; not, perhaps, when you expect, or in the way you expect, but in his own time and way. While your heart can maintain a proper regard to the truth, the love, the all-sufficiency of God, you may sit unmoved amidst blasted comforts and clouded prospects, and say, "I know in whom I have believed. Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Nor suffer unbelief to limit the greatness, the unmeasurable extent, the immensity of the love of God. None but dissemblers and hypocrites would "sin because grace abounds:" an ingenuous mind would reject the temptation with abhorrence. Yet, on the other hand, when the commandment comes, and sin revives, and is set in order before you as exceeding sinful, take heed how you give place to a disparaging thought of the love of God, as if it had not a mantle large enough to cover your vilest abominations of heart and life; and all of them. Rather remember, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Contemplate the provisions, the promises, the triumphs of God's love and mercy in Christ Jesus, and say, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity! He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—But a further caution is needful.

Be afraid of provoking the resentment of Divine Love, by entertaining other loves. God must have all the heart: he will suffer no rival. "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God." "My son, give me thine heart." It is his rightful claim: you have acknowledged his claim, and subscribed with your own hand unto the Lord. No vile affection then, no lust, no inordinate desire of other things must be admitted: the world and every creature, self and every proud ambitious thought, must be kept at a distance. If the heart "go after its covetousness," and become familiar with "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life;" if any idol be set up there, it will prove "the abomination that maketh desolate." It will produce distance, reserve, controversy, frowns, and rebukes. Hear then the Spirit, while pleading for God; "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him:" and learn to say from the heart,

> "Emptied of earth I fain would be,
> "Of sin, of self, of all but thee!
> "Nothing but Jesus would I know,
> "My friend and my companion thou!"

—In one word, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Sin is loathsome and hateful in God's sight. He hates it absolutely and eternally, and he hates nothing else. He will not suffer it to go unpunished —no, not in his dearest children. Nothing so effectually interrupts the endearments of Divine friendship. If you would "keep yourselves in the

love of God," you will need to "serve the Lord with fear;" to shun the occasion, to avoid the contagion, and resist the motions, of sin. You will need strictly and constantly to watch your actions, your words, your thoughts, and every avenue by which a temptation may enter: you will need to come daily to the "fountain opened," and pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over me." No sins grieve the loving Spirit of God like presumptuous sins. Then,

3. Carefully observe the rule which God hath given, for the government of your heart and life. Never let us admit the idea, that as believers in Christ, we are discharged from all obligations from the Moral Law. Indeed, as a covenant of works, Christ has fulfilled and magnified the Law, and in that view "we are not under the law, but under grace." But as a *rule of obedience*, the Lord Jesus has most excellently explained, and by new and powerful motives enforced on his disciples a very circumspect regard to the Law. Try yourselves by this rule, as it is illustrated by our Lord, and you will see that "the commandment is exceeding broad." You will see that there is enough of sin in one duty, to cut off all expectation of being justified by the works of the Law. Ashamed and confounded, you will cry, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults!" You will feel yourselves constrained to come to "Jesus,

are mentioned with marks of his special complacency, because they "clave to him, and were stedfast and immoveable," when their profession exposed them to the reproach of singularity, and the frown or the laugh of the world. The blessed martyrs and others, "strong in faith," have received peculiar marks of Divine favour, because "they loved much, and offered willingly unto the Lord." For his sake they made a ready sacrifice of creature esteem, and worldly possessions, and liberty, and life itself. And verily our Lord declares, "There is no man that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, with persecutions, and in the world to come everlasting life."

But let the love of God be the motive of all you do for him. This is the memorial of sweet perfume, ascending with the offering, and the meanest offering thus presented will come up with acceptance. For our Lord assures us, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name,"—because you belong to Christ,—"verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." How sweet a principle of obedience is the love of God, and how powerful! When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, how willing the service, and how pleasant; how the Christian runs unwearied, undismayed, in the ways of the Lord! If alms-houses, hospitals,

and churches have been built, from inferior principles, what offerings may be expected when the love of God commands the heart!

5. Never give place to any unworthy insinuation respecting the love of God. No wonder that men of carnal minds, who are at enmity against God, should misrepresent and traduce the love of God. They see those who are called the children of God, for the most part a poor and afflicted people; and hence they take occasion to cast reproach on the service and the love of God. But "the world knoweth us not:" they see not the children in their proper excellence: they are strangers to their celestial origin, their rank, their family, and their prospects: they know not that God "hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." But they will know it in the day of "manifestation of the sons of God." Then the bestowment and operations of the love of God will be discovered, to the confusion of their enemies; and God in Christ will be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." But the verdict of the ungodly be far from my dear children. Be it your care to repel the unworthy insinuations of the flesh in the day of adversity. Flesh would insinuate, "God hath forgotten to be gracious." But "let God be true:" his assurance is, "Whom I love I rebuke and chasten;" and who of his children has not found

desire and prayer, suffer no unreasonable doubt of your interest in it.

Finally—If you would "keep yourselves in the love of God," often make use of it. In every time of need have recourse to it; prove it, rely upon it, employ it. A truly loving friend is obliged by being employed: he is gratified by expressions of confidence and expectation. They afford new vigour to the pulse of his affection. Divine Love "giveth liberally, and upbraideth not," either with the frequency or the largeness of the favour asked. Make the word of God your rule; and the more frequent your solicitations, the more welcome. The treasures of Divine Love are unsearchable and infinite: prayer in the hand of faith is the key that will open those treasures. Thy God condescends, with parental regard, to the meanest saint and to his most minute concerns, and smiling asks, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request?" While the wondering spirit cries, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God!"—My dear children, be this friend yours: acknowledge him in all your ways: "*keep yourselves in the love of God.*" Watch diligently lest any thing separate you from the sweet enjoyment of it. Then prayer will be your delight: you will "ask and receive, and your joy will be full:" and you will know what that word meaneth, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the

Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness on the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

Hitherto we have treated the subject as it has respect to *the love of God to us*. There is likewise a subjective view of it. The one is the cause, the other the effect; the one the seal, the other the clay turned to the seal. Love in God is a pure, celestial, eternal flame; the underived, exhaustless source of every saving benefit. In the humanity of the Lord Jesus, it has found a medium of communication to the hearts of the children of men, which becomes effective in the day of the Lord's power. The Holy Spirit, by an act of sovereign almighty grace, worketh faith in them, and thereby uniteth them to Christ; and hence springs "fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ," like fire descending on the altar of God. A spark of this celestial flame, the love of God in Christ, takes possession of the heart: it is there a new and commanding principle. It has much to oppose: it may sometimes seem "like the smoking flax;" but by fellowship with Christ it is fed and maintained, and must prevail until it shall have consumed all the dross of sin and earth, converted the whole soul into itself, and be swallowed up in its eternal source. Thus love produces love; the love of God in Christ, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, becomes the great principle of sanctification and obedience. Hence arises the

Second great duty of the Christian life; "Keep yourselves in the love of God," as it respects *your love to Him.* Feed this flame: cherish this principle.—On this subject it will not be amiss to premise a caution. It is this: See that the love of God which you profess be of the *right kind;* particularly see that it be *pure* and *sincere,* not mercenary. It is possible that a graceless person may think he loves God. But prove the love he professes, and it will appear to have no higher motive than the benefit he receives from Him. This is too much like self-love. But where God has "sent his Spirit into the heart, crying Abba, Father!" there is a new nature, in which new and Divine affections are implanted:—there is the image of God, a kindred mind, a filial spirit, a heart after His own heart, a principle that leads the soul to seek all in God, and to return all to him. This love is superior to every mercenary feeling. It is far beyond the reach of unassisted nature.

Again: see that your love be supreme and undivided, not partial. Many, allured by the advantages of religion, would fain embrace a Saviour, but they cannot part with sin. That is a hard lesson; "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." But the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this: it will suffer no rival. Many would serve God and Mammon. A youth, who had large possessions and a lovely carriage, thought his profession of love to God well supported, when he said to the Great Prophet in

Israel, "All these commandments have I kept from my youth." But when our Lord would prove his love, whether it were supreme and unrivalled, saying, "Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, he went away sorrowful;" and it seems as if the treaty closed. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Beloved, think it not strange, if it should please God to try you in your estate, your relations, your liberty, your reputation and esteem amongst men: ye that love the Lord must be willing to resign your dearest earthly comforts, to lay the male of your flock, and your very Isaac, on the altar at God's command. A storm may rise, and amidst a wreck of creature delights, your Master's voice may be heard—"Lovest thou me more than these?" Primitive Christians "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods:" nay, "they loved not their own lives unto the death." And no wonder, for "Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us."

Further—See that your love be solicitous, fervent, and industrious; not supine and slumbering: that it be full of fears lest it offend, full of cares how to please, God; full of acts of obedience, condescension, and self-denying labour in his cause; full of zeal for his glory. Let it appear in the fervour and stedfastness of your spirit, that a mighty principle, "the love of God in Christ, constraineth you:" shew that "many waters cannot

quench love:" that no earthly power, no allurements, no terrors, can restrain the heavenly flight of a soul borne on the wings of faith and love. In short, let your life be a practical and uniform consecration of all you have and are to him, "who loved you and gave himself for you."

I now proceed to the inquiry—how shall such a frame be gained and maintained? What shall be done to raise and feed the flame of Divine love in the soul? In reply to this, I have a few thoughts to suggest,

1. Often and very devoutly contemplate the transcendent excellencies and loving kindness of God your Saviour. "Consider the heavens which he has made, the sun, the moon, and the stars which he has ordained." Contemplate the earth, so richly furnished for man's accommodation and delight. The whole creation is a mirror wherein to see God; an open volume whereon are transcribed the characters of his adorable Name. But in his *word* his brighter glories shine—his full character—all his attributes in sweetest harmony. There he is exhibited "the perfection of beauty:" majesty and mercy, greatness and condescension, justice and grace, mingle their full glories there. Who can duly appreciate the friendship, the smile, the promise of such a Being? What a heaven upon earth must that man possess, who, in a disordered world, can sit and sing "My Lord and my God!"

2. Endeavour to affect your hearts with close

and frequent contemplation of the love of God, to sinful wretched man, in Christ Jesus. Often trace the wonders of that love to their immense and eternal source. Survey the Father's great design, his mysterious plan, his wondrous gift. Contemplate the person and grace of the Son, "the counsel of peace" that was between them both; the everlasting covenant, that pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Often sit beneath the cross of your loving, dying Saviour. "Behold the Man!" Look into his bleeding heart; think *who* is the Sufferer, and *what* he suffered, and for *whom* he suffered. "Look on him whom you have pierced." A sight of such love will beget love. A live coal fetched from this altar will seldom fail to revive languid affection, and kindle the smoking flax into a flame.

3. Often recollect the circumstances attending the first visit which God was pleased most graciously to make you. It was while you were yet young, perhaps while you was yet a child. You knew not the Lord; you had no acquaintance with the vision of the Holy One: but in a condescending manner he came, he took you in his arms, he set you at his foot; he taught you gradually; he enlightened your mind; he drew you with the cords of a man, with the bands of love; nay, he sent the Spirit of his Son into your heart, and you cried to him "My Father!"—Or perhaps he surprised you with his sudden appearance and majesty. In the light of his glory you

saw your sin, your aggravated guilt, and your vile nature; and were struck with horror. Trembling and astonished, and beginning to sink, you caught the compassionate smile of Jesus. You cried out, and his arms sustained you. Or he came as a prince in disguise; you heard his voice, you wondered at his gracious word, and a savour of his heavenly truth remained on your mind. Never did you feel your heart so drawn, never had you been so painfully convinced that you were poor and needy, wretched and guilty. You could not help entreating the Lord, and saying, "O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send, come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do." Again and again his visit was renewed: his glory shone in his mighty works, and with joy you exclaimed—"It is the Lord!" But whatever way he took to reveal himself to you, it was a visit of mercy and salvation: there was nothing in you to invite or deserve his favour. Never had a poor sinner more need of it; but your heart never sought it. You would have looked to your right hand, or your left; you would have gone any where with your cry for relief, rather than to Him in whom alone the help of a poor sinner is found. But he saw your helpless misery, and pitied your ignorance and prejudice, and of his great mercy he came; unasked he came: he delighteth in mercy. And why was the grace of God extended to you, and not to many others? Or if others had an offer of salvation, he did not, perhaps, *wait* to be gracious unto them: after the first denial, he

frowned and departed, saying, "They shall not taste my supper." And why did he stand knocking at your door, knocking louder and louder, as if determined to take no denial; as if he would trouble you with his importunity, till you should rise and open to him? Why was his visit special, and his call effectual? You well know, the reason can be found only in Himself: "Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight." Often call to remembrance, then, that Bethel visit; the free, the rich, the discriminating mercy, which the God of your salvation then revealed; the promises he then spake, the grace he imparted, the assurances of strong and everlasting consolation he gave; the affection, the gratitude, the elevation yet humiliation of spirit; the confidence, the resolution you then felt. Then was "the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals." Then with the voice of joy and gladness you went after your Lord in the wilderness. He was gracious unto you: he was precious in your sight. Your soul clave to him; and in him was your hope, your joy, your all.

In order to "keep yourselves in the love of God," often call to mind the great mercy you then found, and the grateful affection you then felt; and "as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Whenever you have to complain of languid affections, "arise! go to Bethel."

Lastly—Often look into the history of God's providential dealings with his people. Review

the way in which he has led them, and mark the issue. See what he has been to them, and done for them. It will appear that he was "ever mindful of his covenant;" that "mercy and truth," notwithstanding all their infirmities and provocations, attended them through all their way; that their fears were dissipated, their distresses relieved, their prayers answered; and that supports, supplies, consolations, and deliverances, kept pace with their labours and troubles. You will find that their sharpest sorrows and severest conflicts gave occasion for the kindest, brightest manifestations of the love of God; and as they rise from the deeps of adversity, you will hear them taking shame to themselves, and acknowledging and admiring the power and grace, the faithfulness and loving kindness, of God, in joyful praise.

Review your own history, my dear children: it will furnish endearing motives; it will cherish the love of God in you: there is much in every page. You were cast upon him from the womb: His precious promise, his opened arms, invited the surrender. With fatherly tenderness and love he has conducted you through the period of early youth. Most graciously he has chosen your lot. It is "a goodly heritage," "the heritage of those who fear him." He has blessed you with endeared alliances and friendships in his own family; and in respect of the good things of this life, he has given you the sweetest enjoyment, though not the largest share. Your lot

is enriched with the "upper springs, and the nether springs:" no good thing is wanting there: it is distinguished with "the plant of renown;" the tree of life; the grace, the promise, the everlasting love of God. The right consideration of this grace will ever cause the spring of Divine affection to rise in your soul. Such love demands a large return: Yes, you say, "my soul doth magnify the Lord:" "my lips will greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee." "I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." You have had seasons of painful exercise: but you have seen the cloud break; it has distilled in dews of rich blessing. You have found reason to confess, Truly the Lord is good! You have already found reason to "sing in the ways of the Lord, because great is the glory of the Lord!" Your retrospect will be more extended as you advance; and if your heart delight itself in the Almighty, your prospects will brighten as you proceed on your way.

I have recommended to my dear children, to regard this apostolical and fatherly counsel as it respects the love of God *to them*, and their love *to God*. There yet remains a further view of this important duty, which has an equal respect to the one and to the other. I proceed therefore to say—Be very industrious in maintaining the intercourses of friendship with God, in those various ways in which he is wont to manifest himself unto his people, and admit them to holy fellowship. Friendship, where sincere,

is kept alive by reciprocal acts; by communion of affection. The fire of Divine love will often need to be fed by intercourse and endearment. It is said of Enoch and Noah, that they "walked with God." They were often at His house, and as often, perhaps, He was at theirs: their friendship was habitual, their communion sweet; no distance, no reserve, on either side. There was mutual freedom, with the endearments of pure and becoming familiarity. How this magnifies the grace of God, and dignifies humanity! This honour awaits all the saints. "If a man love me," are the gracious words of our Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Then—

Take heed to bid him welcome when he is graciously pleased to *come unto you.*—Sometimes he comes in his *word:* thereby especially he makes himself known. Therein, I trust, you have already beheld, and will often behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; for therein is seen the face of Jesus Christ, in which is manifested the glory of all his attributes,—"God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." This glory was yet wrapped up in types and shadows, when Moses so earnestly prayed, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory!" The Gospel day brings, as far as the outward revelation goes, the return of that prayer. The Sun of righteousness is risen, and all flesh shall see it. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an

understanding that we may know him that is true." Truth shines abroad, accompanied with the Spirit of truth, and proclaims the everlasting love of God, to the admiring view of holy angels and sinful men. Every individual truth is a mine of soul-enriching treasure. Dig deep into these mines. Search, diligently "search the Scriptures;" praying earnestly, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things contained in thy law." In all this labour there is profit:

> Then let me read my Bible more,
> And take a fresh delight
> By day to read these wonders o'er,
> And meditate by night.

Sometimes God will come unto you in *a precept*. Then present your prostrate soul before him, saying, "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God." It is possible He may come in some awful threatening. Then, trembling at his word, say, "O Lord! rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure!"—You will sometimes have reason to welcome him, when he comes smiling in *a promise*. When a promise, exceeding great and precious, comes to your soul, dropping as if immediately from the lips and heart of God, then receive it with faith and love. It will revive your spirit, however sinking. It will give you sweet repose, amidst griefs and troubles, and fears and foes, in the arms of everlasting love.—Sometimes God will come to you in a providential dispensation.

Many times in his Providence he gives an intimation of his will. It is a call of duty: then reply, "Speak, Lord! for thy servant heareth." Perhaps in a day of adversity and perplexity, it will be "a voice behind you saying—*This* is the way, walk ye in it." Then yield yourselves to God, and follow where he leads.—Perhaps, it is a *smiling Providence*. He comes with a countenance that bespeaks the kind purpose of his heart. Nay, he prevents, he surprises, you with the blessings of his goodness. They are favours suited to your present need, and they exceed your utmost expectation. The love of the Giver sweetens and heightens them beyond all expression. Welcome visit! Your heart is drawn, is bound by these silken cords: it cries in raptures, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!"—"Let not your heart be troubled:" though he come in a cloud, or in a storm; though you see your earthly comforts blasted, your worldly schemes disconcerted, your fondest creature expectations fail, and nature amidst insupportable sufferings wasting;—in the dark night of adversity, let not your heart meditate terror. Remember you are called to "walk by faith, not by sight" or sense. Search your heart: see that no sin is indulged there. Remember, amidst changing and forbidding appearances, God's eternal grace is sure. Expostulate with your sinking heart: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Hath his promise ever failed? Forget not to plead with him: Thou

saidst, "I will surely do thee good!" Remember the duties of an afflicted state; duty is yours, events are God's. In the way of his judgments, wait for him. Ere long his voice will break through the cloud. "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid!" You will find that winds and waves obey him. "Your sorrow will be turned into joy" and praise. The voice of rejoicing and thanksgiving will be in your tabernacle. You will be presented with a further display of his glory than ever. You will contemplate with wonder the mysterious ways by which he unveils and unbosoms himself to those who love him. You will love and trust him more than ever, and you will "comfort others with the consolations wherewith yourselves are comforted." "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."—Sometimes God is pleased to come in public and national calamities. The heavens are brass, and the earth iron; famine rages, or the sword has an awful commission; or "before him goes the pestilence, and burning coals go forth at his feet." Yet he is ever "mindful of his covenant." Times of outward calamity are times wherein Divine love appears in the most gracious manifestation. The fire that consumes the dross shall purify the precious gold. The wind shall bear away the chaff, but not a grain of wheat shall be lost. God's love to his people is a tender love. "They shall never perish," is its gracious assurance. "It shall be well with the righteous:" their sufferings

may abound, but their "consolations shall much more abound." Griefs and alarms constrain their flight as doves to their windows, while Love invites to infinite safety and delight. "Come, my people; enter into thy chambers: hide thyself for a small moment, till the indignation be overpast." Thus "keep yourselves in the love of God," by receiving him with a becoming demeanour when he vouchsafes to *come to you*. To this I add—

Carefully observe those appointments of the Most High God by which you are directed to wait upon him wherever he has an altar; and the general invitation encourages his believing people to expect a private audience, whenever they call upon him. God has recorded his name in our spiritual Zion: He loves her gates: there is his earthly dwelling. Zion, therefore, is the place of our solemn assemblies: you have a gracious invitation to meet him there. The King of Saints has likewise *his day*, which he has sanctified and blessed, when, not exclusively but especially, he will expect to see you there. You are under an engagement to go on that day to "sup with him, and he with you." Then if you would "keep yourselves in the love of God," thankfully accept his invitation: make every other concern give way to it: carefully prepare for it: "Wash you, make you clean;" "put on the Lord Jesus," his robe of righteousness and garments of salvation. Look forward to the day with heartfelt desire, and hail its approach as the day which the Lord has blessed;

after having provided against occasions of hindrance and discomposure in the solemn engagements of the day. Neglect nothing by which your faith in that promise may be encouraged: "Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you." Go as into the house and awful presence of God. Go with deep reverence and humility; yet with the affection, the liberty, the confidence of a child. Carefully improve every opportunity of going up to the house of God, on whatever day. Nay, "despise not prophesyings." Rather esteem very highly the more private meetings of the church. They who on those occasions wait on the Lord, are oftentimes like deputations, composed of the most spiritual and honourable members, chosen to lay the state of the church before its great Lord. Often they are favoured with a special audience: they are admitted nigh to God, and they return with rich grants of blessing. Sometimes the King of kings makes the place of his sanctuary a banqueting-house. To shew the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent Majesty, unto those "who are washed from their sins in the blood of the Lamb, and are made kings and priests unto God and the Father," He makes "a feast of fat things." The table is spread with heavenly dainties. Himself, with a countenance expressive of mingled majesty and mercy, adorns the board; and while he frowns upon the presumptuous intruder, who has, in proud contempt of the rule of the house, neglected to "put on the

Lord Jesus," he welcomes with a smile of complacency every guest who appears thus attired. He deals familiarly with him: "What is thy petition," he cries, "and what is thy request?" "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." With fatherly wisdom and love, he mingles for every guest his own cup, his own portion. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." They "wait upon the Lord, and renew their strength. They mount up with wings as eagles; they run, and are not weary; they walk, and do not faint." Then prize the table of the Lord; and if you will "keep yourselves in the love of God," prepare to meet him on those solemn occasions.

Another privilege, my dear children, belongs to you: you have an *altar to God severally in your houses.* Thither, without formal invitation, you can lead your households, and spread all your cares, and desires, and griefs, before the Lord. You can pour out your heart before him, and direct your believing expectation unto him. Blessed, for ever blessed, be the God of my fathers,—the Angel who redeemed me from out of all evil, who has taught my children to say, "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him;" who has put it into their hearts to "present their bodies," their souls, their all, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." While the pillar of cloud and fire possesses its station on their tents, the angel of the Lord encampeth round

about it; and a voice breaking from the Excellent Glory proclaims, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest. For I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." These promises are "exceeding great and precious." They are rich cordials. Say, then, in the day of trouble, "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy! I will cry unto God Most High, unto God who performeth all things for me." "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not," and our dearest earthly friends live only in our memory and in heaven. "Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer. Thy name is from everlasting!" Ah! what are the palaces of the great when compared with the meanest cottage dedicated to God and his worship, and honoured with his presence! A family God! taking up his abode with you! His promise, like a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life! Recorded there, what a family inheritance, what a birth-right, for your dear children! What a ground of faith when you dedicate them to God! Prize then and frequent the family altar. Beware of negligence: be afraid of idolizing the world, or indulging iniquity in your hearts or in your houses. Plead and claim the promise; "Therefore, now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee." "For thou, O Lord, hast

spoken it, and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever!" Thus maintain the intercourses of Divine friendship, and "keep yourselves in the love of God."

God has a yet more retired altar where his people may have a more private audience still. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Retired devotion is the privilege of God's faithful people. It is exclusively their privilege to be favoured with a key, whereby to admit themselves into the presence-chamber of the King of kings on any occasion, and on all occasions. They have access with confidence "by the blood of Jesus." They are encouraged to come when they will, and to ask what they will. Nay, sometimes their souls run to him in a quick and sudden ejaculation: a devout aspiration on the wings of faith and love, swift as an eagle, flies, and reaches the throne of God; and often returns as quickly the messenger of salvation. So ready and yet so secret is the believer's conversation with heaven, by night or by day, at home or abroad. But as ancient believers had their morning and evening sacrifices, so have Christians their morning and evening devotions. They are important duties; they are invaluable privileges. It is not probable you will "keep yourselves in the love of God," without a careful attention to those seasons. Retired devotions, duly

conducted, avail much to keep the communication open, and preserve a holy familiarity with God. "Yet bodily exercise profiteth nothing!" It is not enough to observe with exactness the stated times of devotion. "God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth." Others, by observing your habitual temper, will, in a good degree, be able to discover whether you are brought near to God in secret duties. Be afraid, therefore, of sin and the world, of business and company,—of every thing that may prevent your gaining the benefit of fellowship with God in secret. It is not possible that any thing in the whole world should compensate such a loss. Especially fear, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." A declension here would be just occasion of very serious alarm. Take pains, then, to keep alive the fire on this altar. You will be saved from many evils: your communion with God will be sweet: and you will be provided with treasures of "strong consolation," when overtaken with affliction or death. Mr. Fleming writes very pleasantly of Mr. Hugh Kennedy of Scotland: When he was dying, a godly minister said to him, "You have cause, Sir, to be assured, that the angels of God are now waiting beside this bed, to convey your soul into Abraham's bosom." "Truly," he replied, "I know it; I have reason to be assured of it; and if the walls of this house could speak, they could tell, how many sweet days I have here had in secret

fellowship with God, and how familiar he has been with my soul."

Then "keep yourselves in the love of God." Your best interest, your richest consolations, are not to be found in creature smiles or worldly possessions. "O God, thou art my God: early will I seek thee." "His loving kindness is better than life." Seek this evidence of your relation to God; the Spirit of his Son sent into your heart, crying "Abba, Father!" Rivals with him for the throne of your hearts will be presented unto you: but "what have I to do any more with idols?" "The idols he will utterly abolish!" Creature expectations are vain. Creature friendships are transient. "Our fathers, where are they?" If, of those burning and shining lights, which from the Sun of Righteousness have, for a season, refreshed and delighted you, some are already set, others are setting. It is fit that they should retire. Grace will prefer them to a higher sphere.

> Yet, in the midst of death and grief,
> This thought your sorrow should assuage;
> Our Father and our Saviour lives,
> Christ is the same in every age.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God," and you will never want a friend: "Christ is all and in all!" In their translation, creature-friends will have joy in knowing, that their Father is your Father, their home your home: and you will have joy in knowing, that a few encampments, perhaps a few stages, or

steps more, and you shall be at home with God in his royal palace, with all your pious kindred, and all the saints and angels already there, enjoying the brightest discoveries, the sweetest manifestations, and the eternal intercourses of the love of God.

With this hope, my dear children, "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified." Amen.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

HEB. xii. 25.

See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.

THE Apostle has been considering the superior advantages of the Gospel, compared with those of the Jewish dispensation. Our text is an inference and serious reflection arising from it: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh, &c." It is as if he had said, "Since the Gospel state of the Church so greatly surpasses that of the Jewish, take heed, as you value your immortal souls, that you by no means reject the dear Mediator of the new covenant, who, in the most condescending and endearing manner, speaks to you in his preached Gospel: for if they who resisted Moses, and refused to receive the laws of God at his mouth, did not escape the severest punishment, how impossible is it that any of us should escape,

who despise the authority, and refuse the grace, of Him who is exalted in the highest heavens, and from thence proclaims to us the glad tidings of eternal salvation?" "Whose voice," adds the Apostle, of tremendous majesty, "then shook the earth," and made mount Sinai and the people round it to quake and tremble: but now he is doing what he hath promised by the prophet Haggai (ch. ii. 6.); "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven," and dissolve and remove the whole frame of the Jewish constitution, civil and religious. "And this word, yet once more," evidently "signifies the removing of those things" of the Mosaic œconomy "that are shaken, as of things that are made" with hands, and appointed only for a time; "that those things," the glorious and unalterable ordinances and privileges of the Gospel which are introduced in their stead, and "which cannot be shaken, may remain" till the end of the world.

Our text is a serious admonition, and reminds us of several most solemn truths:—that in the ministration of the Gospel, the eternal Son of God speaks to us from heaven;—that it is possible some may refuse the offered grace of the Redeemer, and turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven;—that to refuse Him that speaketh from heaven, is to expose ourselves to the most certain and dreadful vengeance;—and that it is the business of a gospel minister faithfully and affectionately to warn his

hearers that they come not into so dreadful a condemnation.

May the Lord the Spirit teach us all to understand these things in their just importance!

1. The first solemn truth we notice in our text is this, When the Gospel is preached, the eternal Son of God speaks to us from heaven.

It is God in the person of his Son, Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, that is here intended. He it was who presided in that great solemnity of giving the Law: it was His voice of thunder and awful majesty that then shook the earth: and it was He, who, by the ministry and mediation of Moses, afterwards appointed an earthly tabernacle, together with a multitude of carnal ordinances, which served only for the removal of external pollutions, and for consecration to external services. But now "he speaks *from heaven.*" He has established a more spiritual and heavenly dispensation. He himself who is Lord of heaven and earth, in astonishing mercy, came down in his own person, to proclaim the grace of the Gospel, and make a free overture of the invaluable treasures of that new covenant, of which he is the Mediator, to condemned sinners. And since his glorious ascension he has commissioned his apostles and ordinary ministers in his name to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Now therefore," says the Apostle Paul in the discharge of this his commission, 2 Cor. v. 20.

"we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead," by every thing endearing or awful, accept the offered grace, and "be ye reconciled to God."

Never let us overlook, my brethren, this most awakening truth contained in our text; That when the Gospel is preached, though by frail dying men, Jesus, the Divine Mediator, speaks from heaven. Ministers are but as the trumpets by which he proclaims his will and tenders his grace.

This consideration should be regarded as a solemn momento to ministers themselves. It should make them humble and diligent in searching the Scriptures, to know the mind of Christ, lest the trumpet give an uncertain sound. It should make them faithful in delivering the whole counsel of God. It should engage them, with purity of intention and singleness of heart, to seek their Master's glory: and it should make them earnest and importunate in seeking that Divine influence and energy, without which their most serious and importunate addresses will be like an arrow shot from a deceitful broken bow which will drop short of the mark, will never reach the heart. And how ought their minds to be impressed with the consideration of the vast importance of this embassy! What tremendous consequences hang upon it! With what an heart-felt concern does the Apostle speak of it, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in

them that perish." Whatever be the issue of our ministry, God, who knows our principles and aims, our diligence and fidelity in his service, is well pleased with us. Yet we cannot but be greatly affected when we think of the winding up of the scene: that while "to the one we are the savour of life unto life, we are to the other the savour of death unto death: and who is sufficient for these things?" Who, without the special assistance of Christ, is able to discharge so important a work in a manner sufficiently humble and faithful, and diligent and affectionate?

But, my dear hearers, this is a subject which likewise demands your attention: When the Gospel is preached, though by frail dying men, Jesus, the adorable Mediator of the new covenant, speaketh from heaven.

This is a consideration which, methinks, should gain us a *ready acceptance* among you. It is reason enough why you should give us the most *serious attention*. We come not as heralds to proclaim war between Heaven and you; but as ambassadors of peace, to propose conditions, the most gracious on God's part, and the most beneficial on your's. But then, still remember, your ministers are at best but messengers and instruments. If saving good be done, and the Gospel prove a ministration of life to your souls, it is the grace of God that does it, and he will not give his glory to another. He

be assured he knows and pities you. He fully knows your down-sitting and your up-rising, and understandeth your very thoughts afar off. He compasseth your path when most retired, and is acquainted with all your ways.

And can you not look back to some particular seasons, when this blessed Redeemer, under a sermon, or by the admonition of some serious friend or minister, or by the reflections of your own conscience, has spoken to your heart, and given you a solemn and awakening sense of your sin and danger? Perhaps he has sometimes hedged up your way with thorns, and brought you into deep adversity, that you should not be able to indulge in the lusts of your heart; but that in the solitude and darkness of affliction, you should be constrained to consider your ways and your doings which have not been good, and turn unto the Lord. Perhaps, thoughtless as you now may be, there was a time when the sorrows of death compassed you, and the pains of hell gat hold upon you, and vows and resolutions expressed the consternation and horror of your spirit. And after all, must the Saviour stretch out his hand in vain? Must he still grieve for the hardness of your heart? Must he hearken and hear, and "no man repent him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done! but every one return to his course," his dangerous soul-destroying course, "as the horse rusheth into the battle?"

Oh! let me beseech you, look upon Him whom

you have pierced, and mourn. Behold him in all the bitterness of his sufferings, when "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." And can you then insult his woes, and crucify the Son of God afresh, by going on still in your trespasses? Can you pierce that heart afresh that poured out its vital blood to wash away sin? O! stop a moment, and think what the end of these things must be. Surely ingratitude like this, so strange and so vile, must fill the vials apace; must cause the wrath of God to burn with a ten-fold vengeance, and sink the monster into the lowest hell.

But, methinks I hear some poor trembling sinner, some wandering sheep, who knows the Shepherd's voice, and has been listening with a melting heart to his awakening and gracious call, eagerly crying out, "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do? I never knew till now my dreadful state of sin and wrath. Oh what a wretch have I been! What authority and what love has this hardened heart resisted! Oh, my sins! my sins! what have I done? Innumerable evils compass me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore mine heart faileth me. I remember my own evil ways, and my doings which have not been good, and I loath myself in my own sight for my iniquities and for my abominations. Against thee, O Lord! against thee only, have I sinned, and done continued evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when

thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.—But, O blessed Jesus, thine inviting voice bids me hope. Lord! if thou canst do any thing, have compassion upon me and help me. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. O pity my wanderings, compassionate my miseries, and hide thy face from my sins. Lord! I am oppressed, undertake for me, and let thy precious blood wash away all my guilt; so shall the blessing of one that was ready to perish come upon thee."—Well, my dear friend, be of good cheer: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Such a cry as this reaches the highest heavens. It reaches the ear, the heart, of the blessed Jesus—of him whose compassions are represented in the conduct of the father of the prodigal, who, "when he was yet a great way off, saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." He who, with so much delight, heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, will graciously say of you as he did of him, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

Hark! he speaks again, and in accents of love invites your confidence, and even commands you *to believe*. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;

for I am God, and there is none else." "Hearken unto me, ye stout hearted that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry. Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Oh, my brethren! let me congratulate you, and shall we not congratulate one another, that such a voice as this is heard from heaven? Ten thousand dreadful thunders might have proclaimed thence the vengeance of inexorable Majesty, and have ushered in the great day of his wrath. But justice is satisfied, mercy reigns, and the heavens resound with the sweet anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men." Alas! that such grace should ever be despised—that such a Saviour should be left to weep over any of us, in such language as he once used to lament Jerusalem's guilt and ruin! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and

ye would not!" This reminds me of a melancholy truth contained in our text.

II. It is possible that men may reject the offered grace of the Redeemer, and turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.

It might have been expected, when so glorious a person condescends to speak from heaven, that every eye should be fixed upon him, every ear attentive, and every mind obedient to the intimations of his will: especially when he comes to proclaim salvation to a lost world, and to pour down, not vials of deserved wrath, but invaluable blessings; such blessings as a God can give; blessings purchased with his own agonies and blood. One would have expected that eager multitudes would have pressed around him, and have fallen before him in submission and grateful joy, crying with united hearts and voices, "Behold we come to Thee, for thou art the Lord our God!" And is this the case? Is such the temper and conduct of the multitude around us? A soul impressed with the consideration of the vast importance of eternal things will cry, "O that there were such a heart in them!" But observation tells us, it is possible men may turn aside from Him that speaketh from heaven.

It is possible men may neglect the word and ordinances of Christ, by which he speaks, and treat the written and the preached Gospel with equal contempt.

It is possible men may indulge in a trifling behaviour under the word. And while the great God and our Saviour is by his ministers speaking of things which relate to their souls' everlasting interests, it is possible they may be totally senseless and unconcerned, and go their way, making light of these things.

Nay, such is the awful depravity of the human mind, and such its apostacy from God, that it is possible, even when the most solemn and interesting truths are delivered, and life and death set before them, some men may indulge not only in inattention, but *in levity*. They may sport on the verge of eternal woe—they may treat that Gospel with derision where their salvation lies, and lose in senseless mirth those moments of sacred time which the riches of ten thousand worlds cannot recal.

Shall I go a step further, and say, that under these solemn circumstances, it is possible some may *indulge in sleep?* I do not mean, that nature may not be so frail and exhausted, under particular circumstances, as to be compelled to involuntary sleep. In such a case the Saviour himself will find an apology for his friends, though it be on the mount of his transfiguration, or in the garden of his conflict. But what I mean is, that even in the more immediate presence of God, and while he speaks from heaven of things that concern our everlasting peace, it is possible, some may allow themselves in sleep, may compose themselves for it, with folded

arms and heads reclined, as if it were with a deliberate and desperate purpose to stop their ears, that they might not hear.—And are these the offerings, my brethren, which any of *you* bring to the Most High God? And can you expect that with *such* sacrifices he will be well pleased? "Offer it now to thy governor" (is the just reply of Heaven: appear in the presence of thy Prince in such a disrespectful posture; and when he speaks, treat him with as much contempt), "will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?" We are informed (Judg. iii. 20), that when the artful Ehud came from the land of Israel to the king of Moab, Israel's enemy and oppressor, and said unto him, "I have a message from God unto thee;" notwithstanding Eglon's dignity as a prince, notwithstanding his unwieldy corpulence as a man, and his estrangement from the true God as an idolater, "he rose out of his seat," in token of his reverence of the Deity. And do you, my friends, bear the Christian name; do you profess to know God, and not revere and worship him as God? Can you dare insult his dreadful Majesty in his presence, and while he speaks, by a trifling unconcern and invited slumbers? Is this your care for your souls, your zeal for your salvation? Surely, did you know the worth of your souls, you would be not thus "slothful in business, but fervent in spirit," seeking and "serving the Lord."

Once more:—I am afraid there is too much reason for this melancholy remark: It is possible

men may, with haughty insolence and contempt, refuse Him that speaketh from heaven. It was the insolent language of Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." We read of some who are called "haters of God;" and it is an awful truth which the Apostle teaches, when he declares (Rom. viii. 7), "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence it is, "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," and is ever labouring to erase every impression of the Divine Image, and every idea of the Divine Being, from the mind: and hence it is, that when God condescends to speak by his providence, or his word, the impious sinner resisteth His Spirit, suppresses conviction, and turns away from him that speaketh, in haughty scorn; joining in the language of those who "say unto God" Most High, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" Oh, dreadful impiety! Can devils go further?

Let me add one more to this mournful train of ideas, and observe; It is possible men may seem by their profession and outward deportment to give attention to Him that speaketh from heaven, and yet their hearts may not be with him. Such a case as this is in the highest degree melancholy; and, alas! how frequent is it! Fellow-creatures may be deceived; but of what avail is the deception, while the Lord looketh on the heart? Ezekiel, who was God's

messenger to the captive Jews, was in danger of being flattered into a good opinion of his hearers, while they attended him in crowds. But God, who searcheth the heart, plainly tells him, they meant to compliment his eloquence, not to receive the word at his lips, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. "They come unto thee as my people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." O, my brethren! there are those who seem to be religious, who are regular, and apparently devout in their attendance on ordinances, and yet refuse Him that speaketh from heaven. They assume the Christian name, but they have not "the mind of Christ." They profess obedience to Christ in the Gospel, but they "will not *come to him* that they might have life."—They have the form of godliness, but are strangers to the life of God in the soul. They do many things in obedience to Christ, but they have not renounced their vain confidence nor their most beloved lusts. They are returned by repentance, but not to the Most High. Their faces are towards Canaan, but their hearts are in Egypt. O fearful delusion!—Sirs, methinks the very mentioning of these things should be enough to alarm us;

enough to put us all upon a heart-searching inquiry; enough to bring us with a trembling solicitude to the Throne of Grace, crying, "Lord, is it I?" "Search me, O God! and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The graceless professor, though not far from the kingdom of God, is the most unlikely to enter. Publicans and harlots enter before him. And, O distressing thought! after a life of profession, to find a "Mene, Tekel" written against us in heaven; and to hear that Jesus, whom we now profess to love, with lips full of indignation, sentence us to dwell with everlasting burnings, as those who would not hear his most gracious voice! Oh! this were the very emphasis of woe!

SERMON II.

HEB. xii. 25.

See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.

(SECOND SERMON FROM THE TEXT.)

HAVING thus stated this melancholy fact, that many refuse and turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven, it may be proper to inquire into the occasion of this strange and injurious conduct.

As to the Jews, their opposition to the Lord Jesus in great measure arose from the mistaken notions they had formed of the promised Messiah, and from their strong prejudices in favour of the Mosaic Institutions. They could not easily relinquish their highly raised expectations of worldly eminence and dominion, and follow the despised Nazarene. They could not easily bear to see the sacred institutions of Moses, and all their venerable rites, like a worn-out garment thrown aside as of no further use, and the religion of their pious fathers exchanged for what appeared to them a novel system. These

prejudices (separate from the consideration of the sacrifice that must be made of the emoluments of office by the very many who served the sanctuary) no doubt operated powerfully, and were hard to overcome.

We have not these difficulties in *our* way; and yet the messengers of a Saviour's love, in our nation and in our day, have too much reason to mourn and cry, "Who hath believed our report?" The blessed Jesus, whom all the angels in heaven worship, whose sacred Name is sweetly sounded on all their golden harps;—Jesus, who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor," who changed the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, for the insults of mortals, and the shame and agony of the cross;—Jesus, who loved us and died for us, is treated with a cold neglect or a determined opposition. He comes to win the nations with blessings purchased with his blood. He comes to call us from a state of condemnation, from the very confines of hell, to his everlasting kingdom and glory, but—he is refused.

He renews the kind overture, and earnestly expostulates; "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors: for whoso findeth me, findeth life, and

shall obtain favour of the Lord; but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death." But, alas! what multitudes, in proud disdain and contempt, or in trifling indifference, turn aside from him, and will not give him the hearing. While their ears are open to every one who will feed their vanity, or gratify their curiosity, or consult their worldly interest, they treat the blessed Redeemer as an impertinent intruder, when he would sound the sweet accents of salvation in their ears, and lead them to eternal glory and joy.—Sirs, this is a most serious matter: let us inquire into the reasons of it, and see if there be not a remedy.

Some turn aside from Him that speaketh from heaven, because they do not know, and are determined they will not believe, that it is the voice of God. There are not a few of those who laugh at all religion as a mere delusion, and treat the Bible as a book of fables. Indeed, Sirs, the growing infidelity of the present day ought to be bitterly lamented by us. The principles of it are eagerly caught at by a depraved mind; and the patrons and abettors of it, inflamed with hellish zeal, are diffusing their poison in all companies; and, alas! with too much success. Does it ever operate, my dear friends, in any of your minds? Let me entreat you, not to be Christians merely because your parents were such, but to be serious in your inquiries. With the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures, and let them speak for themselves. They carry their own inherent

testimony with them. It were injudicious, it were absurd, to reject an offered pearl, because from a superficial glance you suspect it to be a counterfeit, or think you discover some defects in it. And it would be equally absurd to reject the Scriptures, because you meet with some things in them which at first view appear objectionable, incredible, or contradictory. Give the sacred pages a fair examination; try them as to their general scope and tendency; the doctrines and facts contained in them; the character, the disposition, the views, of those who wrote them: try them with careful meditation and prayer, and you will find your Bible to be a jewel indeed; in this respect, as well as others, that the more it is worn, the brighter it will shine. You will find it prevail, like the rising sun, over all the mists with which infidelity would veil its glory. You will find it to be like a field in which is contained a treasure, that will enrich your soul with the sweetest and most substantial joy. No wonder that the libertine should dislike the Scriptures, and labour to reason himself into a disbelief of their Divine original, or to evade the force of truth with a laugh: they condemn his vices, and sound unwelcome tidings in his ears. But the more the principles of true morality prevail in your heart, and a serious concern for the glory of God and your soul's everlasting interest directs your choice, the more pleasure you will take in reading the Scriptures, and with the greater delight you will attend to the voice

of Him that speaketh from heaven. This reminds me of another objection.

2. There are many who, if they will avow the motive that governs them, will say, they are so habituated to the practice of sin, and so much in love with it, that they cannot be reconciled to that self-denial and holiness of heart and life which the word of God requires. They are so inured to their chains, they do not wish to be free: they can even glory in their shame. But, O ye servants of sin, let me entreat you to think upon your ways, and whither they lead. Think of the holiness of God and his tremendous majesty: recollect the terrors in which he appeared when he published his Law; and then think where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear, when he shall come again in more "flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God," and therefore neither fear nor love him, "and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." But you say, "you mean no harm to any one; you have no ill design; your hearts are good; you only follow the course of the present world, and do as others do." Yes, my brethren, you wrong the eternal God, your Creator, of that debt of honour and grateful obedience which is his due. You trample on his high authority; and in so doing, you arm his omnipotence with dreadful terrors against you. But your evil heart suggests again; "God is merciful, and will not be strict to mark our iniquities." Yes; he is indeed rich in mercy, or he would not have endured your provoca-

tions so long. You would not, after so long resistance, see his hand stretched out still in tender expostulation; nor hear one offer more from his gracious lips. Those who look unto him, that they might be saved, will ever find him a merciful God. But remember, he has said, he "will by no means clear the" impenitent "guilty;" but if any one "shall bless himself in his own heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, and add drunkenness to thirst, the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." "He will whet his glittering sword, and his hand will take hold on judgment, and he will render vengeance to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him. He will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, unto every soul of man that doth evil," and "turneth away from him that speaketh from heaven." And tell me, sinner, amidst all your pleas and excuses for sin, have you not a monitor within your own breast, that in some serious moments solemnly warns you, that "the end of these things is death?" And after all your labour to still his voice, are you not a living witness of this serious truth, "There is no peace to the wicked;" and yet, will you dare the event? Will you be obedient to every lust, though death and hell attend every step you take; and be deaf to that voice from

their time, and employ all the ardour of their souls. "We have no time for the duties of religion," is their cry; but the truth is, they have no heart for them. The Lord Jesus does not require you to neglect the business of your lawful calling in the world; but "therein abide," abide with diligence, is his language. But he says, "My son, give me thy heart," and calls us to "seek first," and with the most earnest solicitude, "the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof." And, O Sirs! the time will soon come, when you will charge yourselves with the extremest folly and madness, and for ever lie down in sorrow, if now, while the flattering world solicits your heart, you turn aside from Him that proposes to you a treasure in heaven that faileth not. Remember, you have a precious soul committed to your charge; and, if this perish, it is not in the power of ten thousand worlds to repair the loss! Oh piercing reflection, when opportunity and when hope shall be gone—"While I was busied here and there, dissipated with the pleasures of the world, encumbered with its cares, or grasping at its honours, my neglected soul perished!" My brethren, it is not a mortal perishing body, but a precious immortal soul, that so loudly claims your solicitude; and what is there in all the world that suits its large desires, or its endless duration? Alas, it may rove from creature to creature, but it is formed for nobler employments than earth can afford: it must exist, in everlasting felicity or woe, when all the

glory of the world shall be passed away. And why then should you turn away from Him who hath the words of eternal life?

4. Multitudes refuse Him that speaketh from heaven, through a fond but false conceit of their own uprightness and sufficiency.

There are many, who have indeed little to boast of their moral obedience; nay, and who live in the known and allowed practice of sin, and yet are bold enough to justify themselves. They have some good deeds to boast of; and if they be reminded of their open violations of the Divine Law in other respects, they will cry, "We have no bad design in what we do: our hearts are good; God knows it." Thus the vaunting Pharisee, whom it would have better become to have approached the Divine presence with a penitent heart, and with trembling steps, pushed forward with his "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." Others go further: they have professed obedience to Christ; they have done many things in the practice of Christianity; but they have never accepted the Gospel-offer, of "redemption through his blood." They have never, from a conviction of their own lost and helpless state, fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. They have been awakened to some concern about their souls: their convictions have been attended with some reformation; but they have not received Christ as he is offered in the Gospel. Their awakened souls hovering about the covenant of works, by

a natural bias, have been eagerly inquiring, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" But they have never cordially assented to that method of salvation which the Gospel proposes: they have never known the joyful sound, because they have never known themselves to be absolutely undone, without strength, and ready to perish. But, my dear friends, all you do in religion without this can be of no avail as to your acceptance with God. And whatever you profess, you are not the friends, but the enemies of Christ, till you submit to him as a Saviour, and let him wear the crown of salvation. Believe it, Sirs, he will not give his glory to another. He is constituted of the Father, he is adored of all the saints, not as "the Lord our Sovereign" only, but as "the Lord our Righteousness." There is not a saint in heaven but joyfully unites in that song, "Worthy is the Lamb, for he was slain, and hath redeemed us!" And indeed, "there is no other name given under heaven, amongst men, by which we must" or can "be saved." Salvation through the blood of the Lamb, is the distinguishing characteristic of the Gospel: it is this that exalts it above every other religious system, as most worthy of God, as most admired of angels, and most suitable and delightful to man. On this account, it is "good tidings of great joy:" it is "worthy of all acceptation." And while multitudes see no form or comeliness in him, a crucified Saviour, proposed in the Gospel to the broken-hearted humbled sinner, is as

"a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The troubled soul here finds rest: his heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, by the blood of Jesus: his offended God appears his reconciled Friend, and all his glorious perfections assume the aspect of peace. Now the songs of salvation are in his tabernacle; the love of God is shed abroad in his heart; and he sits at his Redeemer's feet, transported with wonder and joy, and exulting in his precious salvation. Oh, how truly, how greatly blessed are they, who thus know the joyful sound! But it is awful to think, how many under the profession of Christianity reject Christ, and set up their own works in opposition to that infinitely glorious righteousness which the Gospel exhibits. It is the peculiar discovery of the Gospel, but it is no article of *their* faith, that Christ "was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God "hath set him forth," and proposed him to our acceptance, "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins;" but they "hide as it were their faces from him." He is "chosen of God and precious," but "despised and rejected of men." But, my brethren, if you refuse the righteousness of our dear Immanuel, wherewithal will you come before the Lord, or how will you endure when he shall contend with you? Will

the garment you are providing secure your acceptance with a God "glorious in holiness?" Will the Babel you admire stand against the thunder of that word, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them?" Alas! it is but the hope of the hypocrite: it is but the spider's web opposed to desolating tempests. O what a day will that be to professing multitudes, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, when the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding places, and the loftiest mountains of creature-confidence shall confess, "Salvation is not in us!" O what confusion, what shame, what wild despair, when the dreadful mistake shall be discovered, and can never, never be rectified! But there is a hope that maketh not ashamed: there is a voice which proclaims the most charming tidings from Heaven, "Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation a Stone, a precious Cornerstone, a sure Foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Isa. xxviii. 16. He stands secure upon a rock: he shall enjoy sweet and undisturbed repose and heavenly joy, amidst surrounding desolations: "he shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end."

May this, my dear hearers, be your happiness and mine! Let me entreat you to remember, it is not enough that we do many things in religion: our professions may be fair, our duties may be multi-

plied; but we are not secure from the sword of the destroying angel, unless our hearts are sprinkled with atoning blood. When we build for eternity, it behoves us to look well to the foundation. An error here may prove fatal; and after we have thought our heaven secure, we may find our claim rejected, and the door everlastingly shut. This was Israel's error, and it proved fatal, Rom. ix. 31, 32.: "But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness," and sought justification before God, "have not attained to the law of righteousness: wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the Law." "I bear them record" (adds the Apostle, chap. x. 2, 3), that "they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge: for they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." This dreadful mistake of Israel is recorded for your warning, that you may shun the fatal rock, and escape the everlasting condemnation of those, who, from a proud conceit of their own sufficiency, "turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."

5. The reverse of this is the plea which some others offer: they have such apprehensions of their wretched and sinful state, that they cannot think the voice of Christ in the Gospel is addressed to them, or that there is salvation even in Christ for sinners, vile as they are: and perhaps, they are

sometimes ready to adopt the language of those sinners in Sion we read of, Jer. xviii. 12, who said, "There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imaginations of his evil heart."

But why these desponding fears? Is there indeed no hope, while Jesus with so much affectionate importunity stands and cries, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink?" Say, desponding soul, has he made any exception in the gracious offer? Rather, is it not comprised in the most general and extensive terms, with the obvious design to comprehend every description of men, and sinners of every degree of iniquity? Nay, and that every insinuation of a malicious enemy or an unbelieving heart may be precluded, the meanest and the vilest, "the poor, the blind, the halt, and the maimed," are particularly named in the invitation. Can you question the Saviour's ability to help you? Hear his own words: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." And can any thing be too hard for the Lord? Can your guilt, though black as hell, exceed a Divine Atonement? Can the vices of your mind, deep rooted as they are, withstand the power of that God who is able to subdue even all things to himself?

But your desponding heart may suggest; "This may be true, yet my sins surpass the utmost displays of saving grace: many great sinners have been par-

doned and saved, but my crimes are of a still deeper die, and in aggravation exceed all parallel." What, my friend, will it afford you no relief, when you see a *Magdalen* out of whom were cast seven devils, in weeping penitence, at her Saviour's feet?—when you see the very murderers of our Lord, at Jerusalem, triumphing in salvation through the efficacy of that very blood their own wicked hands had shed!—when you hear a Paul with wonder and joy declaring, "I was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, but I obtained mercy!"—and when you hear him, after enumerating to the Corinthians a list of the very vilest of characters, reminding them, "such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Oh sinner! you need not despair while such records of saving grace as these remain in your Bible. Still the mighty Redeemer has been going on conquering and to conquer. In every age, new trophies have been erected of his victorious power, and they proclaim him "mighty to save," "able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him."

6. But methinks I hear another say, "I have often listened with pleasure to the inviting calls of Christ, and have formed many a resolution to give my heart to him; but, alas! my corruptions ever prevail against my purposes, and I am still enslaved." Shall I ask, are you sincerely willing to be the

Lord's? Do you wish to change masters? Is sin your burden? Do you groan for deliverance? It may be, after all you profess, you are still Satan's willing vassal, and never more happy than when you are most eagerly fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. If it be so, the uneasiness you feel arises only from the remorse of conscience which in some serious moments remonstrates with faithfulness, and embitters your dear-bought joys.

But if otherwise, if you wish for nothing more than to be made free indeed, and long for deliverance from the dominion, as well as the condemnation, of sin; if there be no favourite lust that you are not willing to deliver up to the sword of the conqueror; if you have no secret exceptions to the conditions of surrender, but are willing to subscribe to them all; then you have no reason to despair. "Only believe, and you shall see the salvation of God." Jesus, the mighty Redeemer, comes "to preach deliverance to the captives." The doctrine of the cross is the mighty instrument by which he dispossesses the strong man armed, and breaks down the strong holds of iniquity. Present yourself before it; behold the cross of a bleeding, dying Saviour; there especially, sin appears exceeding sinful: his griefs and tears, his wounds and groans, his bloody sweat and inexpressible agony, all declare the hatefulness of that monster you have harboured in your breast; as well as the terrors of thatinflexible justice which you have thereby provoked. And with

these solemn scenes before you, can you still, by allowed sin, crucify the Son of God afresh, and repay that love, which is the wonder of heaven, with renewed insults and griefs? I would hope you tremble at the thought. With these objects in sight, fall at the feet of the bleeding but conquering Redeemer, crying, "Lord help me!" "Shew me thy mercy, and grant me thy salvation." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Lie as a humbled, broken-hearted, self-condemned rebel before him, casting yourself on his mercy, his free unmerited mercy, as your only plea, your only hope; and remember for your encouragement, that in the days of his flesh, he never sent away a humble petitioner without his errand, but "he healed them all."

I might instance many other pleas which an evil heart of unbelief makes use of to justify its neglect of the great salvation.

In the concerns of this world, men will forego present ease and enjoyment, and embark in very difficult and even dangerous enterprizes, and suffer the greatest hardships and fatigue, in hope of attaining a great, though distant, good. But when the Captain of salvation holds forth the crown of unfading glory, and cries, "Follow me," how few obey the summons! "If we follow Christ," many in their hearts say, "we must renounce the pleasures we dearly love; we must bid adieu to those sensual delights and scenes of riotous mirth which

are the life of society; we must exchange our gay amusements for the unsociable manners of the serious and the precise, and expect to be derided for our singularity and sanctity." But where, my brethren, have you ever learnt, that the great Author of our religion has forbidden any pleasures but such as are injurious to your highest interest? And in this he surely acts a friendly part. Why must religion be considered as unfavourable to cheerful enjoyment in the present life? If intellectual pleasures are real, and men of science find delight in investigating the beauties and wonders of nature, why should not a soul that is taught of God, find richer entertainment in contemplating the grand system of Gospel truth, and "account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord?" If the indulgence of vile affections and lusts affords a sensual delight, shall it be thought strange, that a much nobler satisfaction should arise from the exercise of divine and holy tempers? If there be a dreadful tribunal before which we must all appear, and if our everlasting state of happiness or woe must be there determined, according to the things done in the body, must not an accusing conscience embitter all the joys of life, and can we too highly prize the approving testimony of our own breast? If there be a reality in those exalted privileges which the Bible assigns to the people of God; if there be "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" if they are brought

youthful days in pleasure, or his worldly business is now particularly urgent, and some circumstances in a future period of life will be more favourable to the practice of religion; while at the same time, the Judge standeth at the door, and every day will increase the heavy load of his guilt, confirm the hardness of his heart, and render his real conversion to God more difficult and more doubtful.

These, and many more, are the occasions of that direct opposition or cold neglect with which the adorable and the compassionate Saviour is treated by multitudes.

But I must repeat, and O that men would hear the solemn warning in our text! "For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."

SERMON III.

HEB. xii. 25.

See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.

(THIRD SERMON FROM THE TEXT.)

THE observation which we now proceed to consider, is,—III. That to refuse Him that speaketh from heaven, is to expose ourselves to the most certain and dreadful vengeance: "For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."

We are told, they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth. This remark the Apostle had before made more than once in this same Epistle. Heb. ii. 2. "The word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward." chap. x. 28. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses." Give me leave to refer you to a few passages in the Mosaic Law to this

purpose. It may serve to impress our minds with a sacred reverence, a godly fear of the great Lawgiver. The eternal God himself undertook, in the character of a King in Israel, not only to enact, but to enforce his own precepts, and secure the execution of his own threatenings. One of his grand statute laws is that which enjoins the worship of himself alone, as the only living and true God. This was attended with an awful sanction, Deut. xvii. 2—6. "If there be found among you, in any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods and worshipped them . . . then thou shalt bring forth that man, or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death."

And how soon did there follow a dreadful execution of this threatened vengeance. The Israelites, while yet at the foot of Sinai, made them a molten calf, and worshipped it. "Now, therefore, let me alone" (said the Lord to praying Moses, Ex. xxxii. 10), "that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may destroy them." The sons of Levi, as the executioners of the Divine vengeance, were commanded to slay from gate to gate throughout the camp: "and the Lord plagued the people." After this, Israel, seduced by the daughters of

Moab, sacrificed to their gods. Num. xxv. 3, 4. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord, against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel."

Another of God's sacred precepts given at Sinai is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." He shall certainly be punished; but the particular kind of punishment he should suffer was not yet determined. An occasion, however, soon offered, and the great Lawgiver appointed the penalty: Lev. xxiv. 10, &c.: "The son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel, and this son of an Israelitish woman, and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; and the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed: and they brought him unto Moses: and they put him in ward, that the mind of the Lord might be shewed them. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him." Such was the severity with which God, as King in Israel, punished the sin of blaspheming the name of the Lord and cursing. Perhaps the criminal might have pleaded—The words he spoke were words of

course, and he meant no harm—or it was his first offence—or he was provoked to passion by his antagonist, and these unguarded words fell from him when he had lost the possession of himself: but no plea is admitted; "God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain."

Another of those sacred laws enjoins the religious observation of the Sabbath. This was awfully enforced, Ex. xxxi. 14: "Ye shall keep the Sabbath, therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people." And an awful instance is given us, wherein this threatening was executed: Num. xv. 32, &c.: "And while the children of Israel were in the Wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath-day; and they that found him brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation; and they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done unto him." Perhaps, though the threatening denounced against the Sabbath-breaker was express, yet Moses, observing some things in this case which seemed to palliate the guilt, was in doubt how to proceed. But it seems it was a wilful and presumptuous sin. "And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord com-

manded Moses." Such was the severity of the Law given by Moses; and in this awful manner was obedience to its precepts enforced. The like severity we might trace with respect to the commands of the Second Table. But this will suffice.

Two inferences naturally rise out of this subject. The first is this:—

If God enacted these and other laws of nature, which are of universal and perpetual obligation, as the grand institutions of His peculiar government in Israel; and if he was so severe in enforcing the obedience of his own chosen people to them; then it is the highest presumption to think, that, as Judge of the whole earth, he will be less severe in punishing the disobedience of mankind at large: and therefore, however the idolater, the prophane swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, and other transgressors of his holy Law, may escape punishment from men, yet God will not suffer them to escape his righteous and tremendous judgment. The other inference is that in our text:—

"If they escaped not" the severest punishment "who refused him that spake on earth," and transgressed that Law which was given by the mediation of Moses, "much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him," from the adorable Mediator of the new covenant; who, having satisfied the Law on earth, now "speaketh from heaven," the throne of his glory, and makes the kindest overtures of salvation through his blood, to penitent, believing

sinners. My brethren, we are not to think, that God has ceased to be holy and just; that he will connive at sin, or clear the impenitent guilty; because he makes all his goodness to pass before us in the Gospel, and so sweetly proclaims mercy, through Christ, to returning sinners. No: if the Gospel be despised, the only Saviour is rejected; and where shall we find a hiding place in the day of the Lord's anger? Even his own people must "serve him with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." And shall the despisers of his grace find him less holy and just, less jealous and severe against sin? No: but they will find they have provoked a dreadful God, and kindled his wrath into the hottest flames.

These, Sirs, are not words of course, but of the most serious concernment. Bear with me a little while, and I will shew you the reasonableness of this conclusion, and offer you a manifest, a living, and an awful example of the truth of it.

1. As to the reasonableness of this conclusion: The argument of the Apostle carries, indeed, its own light and evidence with it: "For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."

Let it be remembered, that, though the Gospel is a dispensation of the richest grace, yet it reveals no design of God to save men who continue in sin and unbelief. No: but the nature of God and the

Law of God are still in as direct an opposition to sin as ever. The only remedy is the Cross of Christ—there is salvation in no other; and if that be neglected, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation."

Again:—If transgressions against the Law given by the mediation and ministry of Moses were punished with so much severity, let us remember a greater than Moses is here: greater authority is resisted, and greater guilt incurred.

But that which is the special aggravation of sin against the Gospel is, that it is the abuse of rich and most glorious grace. This is what the Apostle dwells upon, Heb. ii. 3: "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast," &c. "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord," &c. ch. x. 29. "He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy," &c.: "of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?"

In the Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ appears a friend indeed, who has not pleaded only but died for sinners; who redeemed us, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own most precious blood. With garments rolled in blood, he

comes to "draw all men after him." His wounds, his groans, his unutterable agonies, plead with us in such a manner as might be expected to impress the hardest heart, and make us all bow with willing minds to his sceptre and his grace. What then does that unbelief deserve, what fiery vengeance, that turns away from Him that speaketh from heaven; that despises the blessings of his purchase, and tramples under foot the Son of God! What daring impiety, what vile ingratitude, what extreme folly and madness! This is indeed the condemnation: it is the highest aggravation of guilt, and will prove the bitterest ingredient in the cup of wrath.

But I proposed to offer—

2. A manifest, an awful, and a living example of the truth and certainty of this conclusion. It is that of the unbelieving Jews. In a solemn manner God declared to Moses, Deut. xviii. 18, 19. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him; and it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." The Apostle Peter refers to this prophecy, and applies it to Christ, Acts iii. 22, and gives the dreadful import of the threatening in more explicit language: "And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed

from among the people." And in how fearful a manner has this threatening been executed upon the Jews! They rejected the counsel of God against themselves; they resisted the fullest evidences of the Saviour's mission; they spurned at his offered grace; they hardened their hearts against his tenderest expostulations; they "crucified the Lord of Glory." And how soon afterwards did the fearful judgments of God overtake them! Their unbelief and scornful rejecting of Christ brought upon them that destruction which had been threatened ages before, and which our Lord foretold in all its various signs and circumstances. The believing few of the Jews, who hearkened to his counsel, were saved from the general ruin, like brands plucked out of the fire; but what scenes of desolation and calamity followed upon the general body of the nation, now abandoned of God! What unexampled miseries were endured! What prodigious multitudes were destroyed by famine or sword, during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans! Well did our Lord declare, in the perfect foreknowledge of all, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Matt. xxiv. 21. And for the same unbelief, and contempt of Christ, they have ever since been exposed to the severest calamities. They are become, as it was foretold, "an astonishment and a proverb, and a bye-word among all nations." Their plagues are indeed wonderful, and of long continuance. That was

a very dreadful judgment of God upon them for their idolatry and other sins, which delivered them up to be carried captive into Babylon for seventy years; but then they were not so awfully left of God as now. They had Ezekiel and Daniel, and perhaps others, to prophecy to them, though in a strange land. But now their plagues have continued for more than 1700 years; nor do any intimations of deliverance yet appear. And is their contempt of Christ the sin, whose enormous guilt has drawn down this dreadful vengeance upon them? What then may we expect, if after the brightest displays of judgment and mercy, we follow in an obstinate refusal of Christ and his precious salvation?

I cannot, therefore, act a more friendly part than in leaving with you a faithful and affectionate warning that you come not into the fearful condemnation of those who refuse Him that speaketh from heaven. With what earnestness the Apostle speaks in our text, like one who would fain succeed in his errand, would fain prevail with reluctant minds, and lead them to that Jesus whom he had found so precious to himself. This, we have observed, is the business of a Gospel minister. Much has been said with this view already: but with what effect? Many of my dear hearers, I am cheerfully persuaded, have heard the voice of Christ in the Gospel, and have experimentally known his precious salvation. "They shall walk, O Lord! in the light of thy countenance. In thy

Name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

Would to God that this were the happy case with all who hear me this day! But, alas! we live in an age wherein the prevailing disposition is to make light of these things, and yet they are things wherein our everlasting interest is concerned. While the business, or the pleasures of life, the concerns of a few uncertain days, engage all the ardour of the soul, the vast realities of eternity are almost wholly overlooked. What multitudes are pursuing the gay scenes of worldly joy, or labouring for uncertain riches, while few aspire after "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Such is the course of the present world: it is the awful consequence of that depravity and corruption of our whole nature which we derive from the fall. The bias of the soul is changed; the mind and conscience are defiled, and reason itself gives place to the madness that reigns within; insomuch that the thunders of Sinai, the threatened vengeance of a God, or the inviting calls of a dying Saviour, have little effect. And such will be the case, till that power be displayed which makes all things new; till that Jesus, who has the key of David, open the heart and procure acceptance for his word. Then the thoughtless sinner will become serious, the hardened and heaven-daring rebel will tremble, the servant of divers lusts and pleasures will groan for liberty, the worldly heart will begin to savour the things of God, and he

who prided himself in the works of his own right-cousness, "shall cast away the idols which he made for himself to worship, to go into the clefts of the rock, for the fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty." Then the weapons of our warfare shall be "mighty, through God, for the pulling down of strong holds." Prejudices, and objections, and beloved lusts, and hearts of stone, shall yield to this all-commanding power. O glorious event! "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord! awake as in ancient time, as in days of old;" breathe upon the slain, the dry bones, that they may live; let us "see thy power and glory, so as we have seen thee in the sanctuary;" and let thy word, in the mouth of a feeble messenger, be spirit and life! My brethren, I stand here this day in the name of Christ, to expostulate and reason with you. The truest and most generous charity constrains me to urge the solemn warning in my text, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven!" constrains me to cry aloud and spare not, to lift up my voice as a trumpet; to warn you of impending danger, and direct you to the strong hold.

This is not the first time, sinner, you have had a faithful admonition. Conscience has sometimes been your monitor, but you have stifled her voice. Pious parents, ministers, and friends have perhaps taken pains with you, from an affectionate concern for the interest of your souls; but you have hated instruction, and cast their reproofs behind you. Some-

times perhaps the word preached has affected your mind and melted you into tears, but you have dropped every serious impression at the sanctuary door; or if any good effects were produced, they were transient and fruitless. But remember, "he who, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Remember, though this be not the first, it may be the last serious warning you will have. That Jesus who has so long been stretching out his hand, with such affectionate importunity, and speaking to you in words of mercy, may next clothe himself with inexorable vengeance, and speak in thunder to your soul. You may hear him, with lips full of indignation, say, "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." And must this, O ye despisers of Christ, must this be your dreadful state at last? After all the tenders of a Redeemer's mercy to you, and all the methods which duty and affection have directed his ministers to try with you; must you, after all, have your portion with unbelievers? Must you who have so long enjoyed the shining light of Gospel grace, for your neglect of the great salvation, be cast into outer darkness, where "the things which belong to your peace shall be for ever hid from your eyes;" where no beam of hope shall ever appear, where

the horrors of a self-reproaching, despairing mind shall be expressed in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? My soul trembles at the apprehension of this scene of horror. Bear with me, my dear friends, while I yet again expostulate with you; for I would fain succeed. The issue of this negociation is of the highest importance. It is not whether you shall pass a short and uncertain life in prosperity or adversity. It is not whether you shall be proselyted to one party among professing Christians or another;—whether you shall be called by one distinguishing name in the visible church or another;—whether you shall conform to particular modes, or reject them;—but it is whether you shall be a Christian or an infidel; whether you shall be a companion with angels or devils for ever; whether you shall join the songs of the blessed, or the groans and blasphemies of the damned; whether you shall be admitted into the kingdom and joy of your Lord, or suffer the vengeance of eternal fire; whether the infinite Jehovah shall smile with sweet complacency for ever upon you, or frown you from his presence, and rain upon you fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest!

Oh! that must be blindness and hardness in a dreadful degree, that does not see and feel the importance of such things as these! And what prejudice, what pride, what love of the world, what delight in sin and enmity to God must prevail in that heart, which does not yield when its everlasting

interest is at stake! Yet, alas! this is no uncommon case: nor need we greatly wonder at it, when we reflect on the strong propensities of corrupt nature; when we remember that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," (1 Cor. ii. 14.): and when we are likewise told (2 Cor. iv. 4), that it is the special aim of "the god of this world to blind the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

But "faith cometh by hearing:" and shall we not hope that the time is at hand, when the all-conquering arm of the Lord shall be revealed, and the Gospel shall come, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance?" Who can tell but this blessed event may take place to-day? Who can tell but there may be joy in heaven occasioned by the conversion and salvation of some precious soul among us? We should not despond while that promise is upon record (Is liii. 10), "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand: He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

Come, my brethren, let me entreat you, for a few serious moments, listen to the dictates of reason and affection.

A voice from Heaven addresses you: the adorable Jesus speaks. Were it man only, or minister, then indeed you might spurn at their counsel: but what they do is in Christ's stead. The Lord Jesus calls you by them. That Jesus, whom all the saints adore and love—whom all the angels in heaven worship—that Jesus, who has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."—It is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He speaks, not in tremendous thunders, but in accents of love and compassion. He offers pardon and salvation, to rebels doomed to eternal flames; offers them without money and without price. O surprizing grace! We, vile wretches, are the offenders, and ought to have made the first overtures. It had become us to have sought his mercy, on the bended knees of our souls, with tears of penitent grief; if it had been possible, with tears of blood. But, O wonder of mercy! It is He who begins with us; He who has heaven and hell under his authority—He comes entreating us by his word, and beseeching us by his ministers, to accept his infinitely precious grace, to be saved with an everlasting salvation, and to receive on our guilty heads immortal crowns of glory and joy. O amazing extent of mercy! What heart of stone must not such love as this dissolve in penitential affections!

And why, sinner, why is it He calls you? Is it because he has need of you to do Him honour?

He might have secured a revenue of glory to himself from your fearful and everlasting destruction? Is it because you have rendered yourself worthy of his regards? Alas! you have made him to serve with your sins: you have wearied him with your iniquities. No: but it is compassion: the same compassion that led him to weep over impenitent Jerusalem directs his gracious voice to you.

And can you turn away from Him that speaketh? Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! The great God and our Saviour speaks: he calls, he reasons, he entreats, he beseeches; and man, wretched, vile man, turns away, and will not hear. And shall this always be the case?

Bear with me, my dear friends, while I represent to you this adored Friend of sinners in another view.

Behold him in the depth of his humiliation: "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Behold him who is Lord of angels, and Lord of nature, in human flesh, loaded with reproaches, marked as the man whom the nation abhorreth, treated as the vilest miscreant—and yet pouring out his precious blood for the life of his very murderers!

O miracle of mercy! What unheard-of love is here! And was this the price which the Saviour of sinners paid? How dreadful that justice which required such a satisfaction! What amazing compassion and mercy was that which offered it! What a glorious salvation must that be which is thus pur-

chased! And what an enemy must that man be to his own soul, who turns away from him that proclaims it!

Sinner, have you ever considered what that offer is which is made you from Heaven? It is to possess all the grace of Christ, and all the glory of Christ, and to be admitted into a most intimate, endearing, and everlasting fellowship with Christ himself. It is to enjoy exceeding abundance, beyond all you can now ask or think. "Come," the blessed Mediator cries; "come and partake of the unsearchable riches of my grace, the infinite purchase of my blood. Come, and see, and possess the goodly land, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, where rivers of unmingled pleasure flow for evermore." Oh! what hearts of stone must they have, who refuse him that thus speaketh!

My dear hearers, could I think of arguments more strong, or words more likely to persuade, I would gladly employ them, in beseeching you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. But are further arguments necessary? Can you yet resist a Saviour's love? Can you yet persist in grieving, by your impenitence, that heart which poured out its precious blood for you, and which so affectionately offers heaven and glory to you?

What, sinner, if Christ himself were visibly to appear before you when retired, and show you his wounded hands, his wounded feet, his wounded side, and reveal the infinite compassion that dwells

in his bleeding heart; and then, with tender expostulation say, "Thy Saviour claims thy love: I beseech thee, by all my bitter sufferings, and by the compassion that still dwells in my heart, crucify me no more by thy sins: trample me no more under foot by thine unbelief: grieve not my Holy Spirit by any longer refusal of mine offered grace. My son, give me thine heart. Come to me, and my blood shall cancel all thy guilt. My grace shall subdue thy lusts, and cleanse thy polluted nature. I will bear thee in the arms of my power: I will carry thee, in the bosom of my love, safe from the rage of earth and hell, to mine everlasting kingdom and glory, where thou shalt dwell and reign with me for ever?" Sinner, could your hard heart resist such grace? Could you turn away from Him thus speaking to you? Rather, would you not fall at his feet, in tears of penitence and love; would not every power of your soul proclaim his amazing grace, who so dearly purchased, and so sweetly proclaimed, salvation to you? And yet Christ in the Gospel makes you this very offer, though not in this sensible manner. O! see that ye refuse not Him that speaket .

There is a day coming, when the Lord Jesus shall appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and all the nations of the earth shall be gathered before him: and he shall separate the one from the other as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and by his sentence the everlasting state

of every individual shall be unalterably determined. Say, my brethren, should He then speak to you from the throne of his glory, as the objects of his delight, and in sweetest accents say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" could you be deaf to that inviting voice? Could you turn away from the enthroned Saviour, and refuse an offered salvation? Oh no! your heart would leap at the sound; your tongue would speak aloud His praises; you would fall at His feet in an ecstacy of wonder and joy. And does he now offer you less than this? Why then must he stretch out his hand, and no man regard? O! let me affectionately beseech you, let me solemnly charge you, that ye turn not away from Him that speaketh from heaven. It would be to refuse the greatest offer that can possibly be made you: it would be to despise the most amazing kindness and love that was ever found in the heart of a friend: it would be to expose your highest and everlasting interest to irreparable loss: it would be to arm the justice of God with most dreadful vengeance, and to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.

I hope none will go away, saying, "We make too much ado about religion," and regard it as a matter of indifference whether they are the cordial disciples of Christ or not. Sirs, if there be a reality in religion, it offers you advantages which you cannot neglect or refuse, but to your soul's everlasting injury. It warns you of that tremendous wrath,

self;" and it is self-deception of the worst and most fatal kind.

The Apostle supposes, first, an imaginary conceit—" a man thinketh himself to be something:" secondly, the real and awful fact—" he is nothing:" and thirdly, he gives us the melancholy occasion of this unhappy mistake—" he deceiveth himself." Through the influence of self-flattery, he thinketh himself to be something; something spiritually, really, and not in appearance only; something in God's esteem. Solomon saw reason to remark (Prov. xxx. 12), " There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness;" and there still is reason for Paul's caution, Rom. xii. 3: " I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly." In this very interesting and momentous subject, we have to pursue two inquiries, and to ponder a weighty consequence. Lord, let that light accompany thy word, and shine into our heart, that maketh manifest! " Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed!"

The present inquiry is,—I. Whence proceeds this proneness to self-flattery and self-deceit; this propensity to impose upon ourselves in things of everlasting moment? It may be ascribed to various causes;—first, I suspect that in many cases, it may

be found to originate in ignorance; ignorance in several respects: especially, it is to be ascribed to *ignorance of God*—of his infinite purity and holiness, his absolute eternal hatred of sin. Nothing lays a creature so low in his own sight, as the manifestation of God. In His sight "the heavens are not clean." Holy angels dwell in the vision of his glory, and *they* cover their faces with their wings. Mankind, by the fall, have their understanding darkened; nay, they will not behold the majesty of the Lord. In some instances, by a miracle of grace, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is light which strikes the mind of man with surprize, with distressful alarm, with grief and shame. Sometimes, in the way of his judgment, God is pleased to renew his visits, and to revive such impressions of his glorious holiness. Such was the end of the Lord in those hard lessons, those mysterious awful dispensations, by which his servant Job was taught self-abasement and godly fear, Job xlii. 5, 6. Alas! for the man who abhorreth not evil, who presumptuously and wilfully violates the express commands of God, who has not the fear of God before his eyes! Of such a man it may be truly said, he is ignorant of the majesty and holiness of God: he has never with open face beheld in the Gospel, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; he has never devoutly contem-

plated the manifestation of God, at the foot either of Sinai or of Calvary. He is "blind, and cannot see far off:" therefore, he entertains very low thoughts, and very unworthy thoughts of God. In his foolish imagination, he conceives of Him as such an one as himself; as if the Holy, holy, holy, LORD OF HOSTS, regarded sin with no more hatred than himself doth. No wonder, under these circumstances, that man should walk in the way of his own heart; that he should sin, and think lightly of sinning; that he should regard his thoughts and actions with self-complacency, and think himself "to be something when he is nothing." But who may abide the day of HIS coming; and who shall stand when HE appeareth.

From a want of the knowledge of God, followeth *ignorance of his holy law.* The Lord Jesus, animadverting on the religion of the Pharisees, discovered a fatal deficiency in this respect: they had overlooked, or explained away, the spirituality of the law, and the regard which its precepts have to the affections of the heart: they aspired after, and recommended, a fair shew in the flesh, as if the Law had respect to nothing further. Hence, in our Lord's esteem, they were like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear "beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." This reproof, alas! seems to belong not to the Pharisees of former times only: many professors of the present day, it is to be feared, rest in mere external refor-

mation, because they persuade themselves that the Law requires no more; they are pure in their own eyes, though their heart remains "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." They seek not the renewing of the Holy Ghost, nor is it to be expected that they should, while they remain ignorant of the holy Law of God. Saul of Tarsus had long regarded his profiting in the religion of his fathers with much self-complacency; but through the grace of God towards him, this dangerous mistake was timely detected. "For I was alive without the Law once, &c." Rom. vii. 9, 10. Afterwards, this happy man, instructed in the school of Christ, says, "I know that the Law is spiritual;" it has a spiritual import; and when it comes with a convincing light, it searches and tries, and makes manifest the awful iniquity of the heart. No wonder that persons, who, according to Paul's representation, have lived "without the Law," should remain ignorant of themselves, strangers to the defilement and deformity of their own hearts; in no degree alarmed by the abominableness of iniquity, the vile affections and lusts which reign and triumph within. They cannot help perceiving and acknowledging the bitterness of the streams: but this they can make light of, while they never suffer themselves to suspect that the evil is radical, that the spring is corrupt, that their very nature is sin; that out of the heart, as its natural and abundant utterance, proceed "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-wit-

ness, blasphemies;" and that it must be so, till grace doth much more abound, and the Gospel, received by faith, becomes "the power of God unto salvation." This affecting, humbling fact, Paul was given to see and freely confess, Eph. ii. 5: and how gratefully his heart admired the grace which wrought salvation in him is expressed, Titus iii. 5, 6. Self-knowledge, then, whatever pain, and shame, and horror it occasion, is a merciful attainment. Until this light breaks in upon the mind, sinful man is slumbering and sleeping: he "thinketh of himself more highly than he ought to think." It is this that rouses him to cry in distressful surprize, "Lord, save me: I perish!" Christ is then, and not till then, precious.

Once more: *ignorance of godliness*, of what godliness consists in, is a further occasion of self-deception. What is godliness but the image of God drawn by his own Spirit on the soul of man; the transformation of the soul into the likeness of the Lord Jesus; a new creature of God, Christ formed in the soul, or the mind of man created anew in Christ Jesus! But there is an imitation of godliness imposed on the ig norance and credulity of the professing world, as the new creature of God's forming: unchanged nature, ornamented with a fair shew of temperance and justice, of benevolence and charity, of zeal for the outward form of religion, with whatever virtues may charm the eye and secure esteem. A sightly figure is produced, but it is the work of man; of man aided

by Satan, who affects to transform himself into an angel of light. The finger of God is not here; the impression of the seal of Heaven. The breath of the almighty union with Christ, the life of faith, the heart directed into the love of God,—the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father,—is not here. Nor is the stamp of immortality here. Storms and floods will wash away all these adornings, when God shall come to make up his jewels. He will frown these pretenders away with abhorrence: "I know you not;" and "reprobate silver shall men" and angels "call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." Paul, while a Pharisee, had a distinguished share of this glory of man; but he learned to account it "loss for Christ,"—for Christ in him the living spring of holy affections and every Christian virtue: and who, that could distinguish between things that differ, would not? For they that are wise shall shine as the sun: in the great separation day, they shall be found the children of God without rebuke. In these several respects, many deceive themselves through ignorance: and, indeed, to this cause must be ascribed a strange conceit that requires to be mentioned;—it is,

Secondly, That a man may have a good heart, while his life is bad: and if a man can persuade himself that his heart is good, he will readily conclude that all is well. Very contrary to this, is our Saviour's maxim; "The tree is known by its fruit," Matt. xii. 32—35. Thus fully did our Lord con-

demn this fallacious pretence in his ministry: *they*, therefore, deceive themselves, who expect that it will be admitted at his tribunal. No: he has another end in view, and he has shown how much his heart is set on accomplishing it; "he gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." He tells his disciples, "I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain;" and again, "every branch in me that beareth not fruit, *He*," my Father, "taketh it away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "To be carnally-minded is death."

Another conceit equally strange and delusive, is,

Thirdly, that if a man be of the true religion, his religion will save him, whatever his life and character be. Unreasonable pretence! Yet with this persuasion, many a deluded Papist maintains a full confidence of salvation; and many a Protestant, too, on the same principle, holdeth fast the creed of his ancestors, nor would for the world be drawn aside from that path to the sanctuary which their feet had been wont to tread: and if the doctrine he embraces, be the doctrine according to godliness, and his heart and life be sanctified through the truth, it is all well. But let not a man think that he shall

derive any thing better than aggravated guilt and condemnation, from the antiquity and excellency of any religion, while it leaves him destitute of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Never had any people more reason to value themselves on account of the divinity and antiquity of their religion than the Jews; and yet, when their religious performances degenerated into a form, however constant and costly their oblations, they were vain, and worse than vain, in the sight of God. The man who boasteth of his religion, and on that account "thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, deceiveth himself."

Fourthly: There are others, who frame to themselves an abridgment of the rule of duty: they have respect only to God's negative commands; and herein deceive themselves. Their religion, if it deserve the name, suffers the omission of important duties; and is distinguished by none of the divine affections and heavenly tempers which adorn the Christian name and character. Their confidence remains unshaken, while they maintain, "I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers. I am no drunkard, or sabbath-breaker: no one can charge me with blasphemy, or perjury: I am no man's enemy, neither have I injured any man." As if they had never read; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Re-

saved. And as it is in regard of our persons, so it is with respect to our offerings and services. On the ground of what has been stated, a moment's consideration will shew, that no prayer, that nothing that a man does, can be accepted of God, while himself is out of Christ. Alas! how should his offering be accepted? Himself is in a state of condemnation, "a child of wrath;" nay, and under the aggravated guilt of having neglected the great salvation. Yet when his heart shall be prepared to make Christ his hope, and to flee for refuge to lay hold upon that hope set before him; whenever, like the publican, with a contrite believing heart, he can look up to the Mercy Seat, and cry, "God be merciful, to me a sinner!" the impediment to the gracious return of prayer will exist no longer. By this act of faith, he receives, he embraces, Christ: he becomes one with Christ, and Christ in him becomes a living spring of sanctifying grace and holy affections. Until now, not only was he in a state of condemnation, but his nature was sin, his heart enmity against God. And "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean;" or how shall any offering come up with acceptance on God's altar, which does not proceed from a heart purified by faith? It is Christ, and nothing but Christ, within us, that God can behold with complacency. They are degenerate plants of a strange vine, and their grapes are wild grapes, who are not grafted into Christ: but "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." He is a new man:

he is not only in a new state, but he has a new nature, a new character: he is delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Alas, then, for those who profess to draw nigh to God, but make not Christ their hope! who make no use of him as their altar, their sacrifice, or their priest! They call upon God for mercy: they multiply their devotions: in the day of their distress they cry aloud; but not a promise have they to encourage their hopes. We say not, they are finally out of the reach of mercy; but while uninstructed into the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, they are without the blessed enclosure on which mercy sheds the blessings of salvation.

We have been establishing an awful truth. "The prayer of the wicked," (and where is the Christless, graceless man, to whom that character doth not belong?) "the prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord." The design of this remark is not to discourage the sinner's prayer; but it is to apprize every one who would draw nigh to God, that no worshipper can be accepted who does not make the cross and righteousness of Christ his only plea. It is to urge the awakened sinner to see that his hope be in Christ; that he come by the new and living way; that he give his cause into the hands of the "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Delay not in coming; but be sure you come with your of-

ferings to God's altar; that you come to the Mercy Seat sprinkled with blood; to the Throne of Grace, with your eye fixed on the Lamb in the midst of the throne.—The design of the remark is likewise, to convince every one who entertains hope of salvation through Christ, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" that no man is a believer, who is not sanctified through the truth; that he never, in the light of faith, saw Christ crucified, who is not himself crucified unto sin and the world.

I have to mention one occasion more of self-flattery and deception; and that is,

Sixthly, The neglect of self-examination. Too many professors are superficial in their attention to this important duty. Hence, favourable conclusions are admitted on very slight grounds: in their own estimation, they class with those who are the saved of the Lord; while yet they have never soberly and impartially inquired, if the things be in them "that accompany salvation," "*Examine yourselves*," is the Apostle's serious charge. "Know ye not your ownselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?" The Word of God is a mirror which, properly applied, will shew to every man his real state and character. If, then, you would not deceive yourselves, make use of that glass; try yourselves, your repentance, your faith, your practice, —try your heart by the Word of God.

Thus we have considered some of the principal mistakes and omissions by which many are led to

deceive themselves. We now proceed to point out some clear specific marks of a deceived heart, in answer to this question:

II. Among those who "think themselves to be something," of whom may it be said, that indeed they are "nothing?" They have a persuasion that they are Christ's, and that He is their's; that they love God, and are godly, and shall dwell for ever with God in heaven; and yet they are "nothing:" they have no part in Christ: they are without the essentials of true religion. And who are these awfully mistaken professors? The humble believer is often fearful, and trembling will ask, "*Lord, is it I?*" Is this *my* case? We shall answer the question by giving some positive signs, which will require but little illustration.

First: Under this delusion is the man who has a good opinion of himself, while the Word of God is against him. Those are evil times wherein men will not hear sound doctrine; and that man is in a fearful state, who regards with angry resentment the faithful messenger of God; declaring, as Ahab of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he never prophesieth good of me, but evil." Remember, God's word will stand, whatever become of your's. If in your opinion you be justified, while by the Word of God you are condemned, you deceive yourself. It is by the Bible you must be judged; by *its* verdict you must stand or fall to all eternity. What is there more terrible that can be said of any man, than that

the Word of the Lord is against him. Fall, then, under the authority of God in his Word: yield to its convincing power, while there is yet a remedy in that Word,—while yet the precious blood of Christ is there revealed as

"A sovereign balm for every wound."

Secondly: Another thinks all is well, because he is doing something whereby to recommend himself to his fellow-creatures, while yet it is not his care to approve himself to God. The Word of God requires more than this; the grace of God teaches more. Under its constraining power, Paul said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men." To Timothy he writes, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God;" and he publishes it as a rule to be universally applied, Rom. ii. 28, 29, that "he is not a Jew that is one outwardly." The man, therefore, who is not in retirement what he would seem to be before men,—who makes it not his *chief* care to worship God in spirit and in truth, *deceiveth himself.*

Often, among professors, you meet with a person who passes for a reformed character, a changed man; yet, alas! he properly classes no higher than with *almost Christians.* We mean,

Thirdly, The man who has left some sins, but he hath not, he cannot, leave all sin. Some sins he still holds fast: they are *easily besetting sins;* ha-

bits confirmed by long practice; sins to which he is strongly impelled by nature, constitution, the course of this world, the influence of neighbours and friends. Or they are *gainful* sins; they cannot be relinquished without too great a sacrifice, and still greater hazard: besides, "it is the way of the trade:" "other people, even good people, do the same." Or they are *pleasurable* sins; they "relieve the toil of business, and make life pleasant;" and "while we keep within bounds, surely we may be allowed *now and then* a sip of the cup of pleasure." Nay, perhaps, the plea of *necessity* is urged: they are Sabbath recreations, and the body, oppressed with six days' confinement and labour, stands in need of them. Thus an awakened conscience, under the fear of punishment, will surrender much to Christ, but still makes some reserve: it would have this or that sin spared. "Is it not a little one?" "When I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." But the Lord Christ will yield to no compromise: He will accept of nothing short of an undivided empire. Nay, true grace would dispose us to give him all: the heart "groans, being burdened;" it invites the Conqueror; it pants for entire deliverance from the power and the very being of sin. That professor, therefore, who cannot be reconciled to parting with *all* sin, in heart and endeavour, must be said to *deceive himself*.—It is true, sin will remain even in a renewed heart, but it does not reign there: it is not

even tolerated there: it is shunned and hated as an intruder and an enemy.

Again; Fourthly: There are persons who appear forward in religious practice;—with much show of zeal, they apply themselves to the performance of some things, but they are reconciled to the neglect of other important duties. This proves that their heart is not "sound in God's statutes;" for the decision is very solemn, Jam. ii. 10; "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend" presumptuously "in one point, is guilty of all." Where the grace of God has wrought effectually in the heart, and love has become the principle of action, the fruit of that gracious principle will appear in uniformity and consistency of character. It is a false heart that observes some command, performs some duties, and disregards others. Christian charity, indeed, is sometimes constrained to soften censure with compassion, and furnish an apology for some persons of upright minds, who through want of courage, and the difficulty attending the commencement of new and singular practices, are deterred from manifest and important duties: but it is not the part of upright Christians to live in the neglect of duty through indifference, or to avoid the reproach of singularity or censure, derision or persecution.

Fifthly: Alas, for those professors whose goodness "is as a morning cloud; and as the early dew it passeth away!" For a time, their affections are

warm, and they do many things gladly; but they soon tire, and where is the blessedness they spake of? Perhaps opposition arises: they find, that if they will be godly, they must suffer persecution. The genuine principle of religion in the heart, the living spring of Divine love there, would not supinely yield to the enemy: it would be roused by opposition; it would call forth all its energies, and cry to Heaven for help; it would surmount difficulty, and spring up into everlasting life. No wonder that the brook in summer should fail; that trees which have no root in themselves should wither and die; that Christians in name and profession only should go back, and walk no more with Jesus. Yet they will speak of the change they formerly experienced still: they will tell of what they tasted, and how they felt; and amidst the indulgences of a sensual ungodly life, flatter themselves, that herein they have a ground of hope. But "if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

The last discovery of fatal deception is this: Many professors value themselves because they are free from scandalous sins; yet they are not concerned to be purified from *heart* sins. After the manner of the Scribes and Pharisees, perhaps, they are exact, and even scrupulous, in circumstantials: they "pay tithe of mint and annis and cummin," and like them have omitted "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." In externals, they are punctual and exemplary, while their heart goeth after their

covetousness. Appearances before men are fair, but some secret iniquity holds its place in the heart: and David says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Perhaps it is the idolatrous love of the world;—He who searcheth the heart, sees the prostration of their very soul before this chosen idol. Or it is a fatal confidence in themselves; and while they profess much love to Christ, they do in their heart reject him. They "go about to establish their own righteousness." Fatal deception! and yet unsuspected is the delusion! "What lack I yet?" cried the boasting candidate for heaven, standing on the Babel of his own building; "what lack I yet?" Alas! what of the essentials of religion did he *not* want? He wanted a clean heart, an upright heart; he wanted a humble, contrite, believing heart. His edifice was costly and towering: it made a beautiful appearance in fair weather; but it wanted stability—it wanted a foundation. What will it be in a stormy tempestuous day? It will be found "a refuge of lies," and the overflowing scourge will sweep it away. But "behold, I lay in Zion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded."

We have gone through what was intended, in order to the investigation of the character referred to in the text—We have to represent,

III. The very serious and fatal consequences of such a mistake. First: It is *himself* that man thus deceiveth. A man is not a little vexed and mortified,

when deceived by another; when a neighbour has taken advantage of his ignorance or inattention, and imposed on his credulity; when he finds that his affection, his benevolence, or his confidence has been misplaced. Yet it is worse—the discovery is more mortifying still—when he has deceived and cheated himself. He is injured; and it is his own stupidity, his own perverseness or presumption, that is the cause of it.

Secondly: He deceiveth himself in a concern of the greatest weight and importance. No one likes to be deceived in worldly matters; but *he* has deceived himself in things of far more serious consequence! He has put a cheat upon himself, to the loss—not of a few shillings or pounds; not of all he has in the world, or of his reputation among men; nay, not of his health or life; but—of his precious never-dying soul. And there is reason to apprehend, that this loss will be final and irreparable; because,

Thirdly, Such a deception, not discovered, is an effectual bar to conversion. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Solomon saw reason for this remark; and it is especially applicable to a man who is uplifted with high imaginations and spiritual conceits. The mind of such an one is fearless, senseless, and secure; like the mind of a sick man in a state of delirium or of madness. What will reasoning or expostulation avail? Without a miracle it will

be like artillery directed against a fort which it cannot reach. The man, in his own conceit, is whole; he needs no physician; he will spurn away the medicine which might save his life.—There is another affecting circumstance pertaining to this case, which is,

Fourthly, That he is likely to be *surprized* with disappointment; and this will render the confusion and horror the greater. Many a partaker of the grace of God, many a faithful servant, a beloved child, has judged himself a hypocrite: he has proceeded "walking in darkness, and seeing no light," even to the very confines of glory. Oh! what must be his joyful surprize when, through all this darkness, the light of heaven breaks in upon his spirit; when some shining angel hails him "an heir of God," and, pointing to the opening heavens, says, "Follow me!" But "what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" Present to your imagination a graceless professor in the moment of dissolution; one who was confident of salvation, through fond and flattering conceits which he never had prudence enough to examine. His confidence now fails him; Heaven frowns on his spirit; every beam of hope is extinguished; and while the horrors of eternal darkness gather around him, the roaring lion leaps on his prey! "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the

way everlasting?"—It is fit that we should yield ourselves to the impression of this solemn subject. Some reflections will naturally occur to the mind: we shall then close with stating, in a few friendly counsels, a remedy for this serious evil.

Reflection 1st. What need have we to search and try ourselves; to see that we rest not in outward forms, or in generally-received opinions; and to regard with great caution the conceits of our own minds, and the flattering insinuations of others! Let us very seriously and earnestly inquire if the saving work of the Spirit of God be wrought in us; and let us never rest till we have satisfactory evidence that we are "passed from death unto life;" that "Christ in us" is our "hope of glory."

2dly, There is great need of the faithful preaching of the Word, and of your diligent attendance on it. This is an ordinance greatly needed by mankind in general. There is great need of it, in order to counteract the injurious principles and the groundless expectations which arise from the ignorance, the pride, the sensual and sinful bias of the heart of man, and the powerful unremitting influence of the great deceiver. There is great need of it, in order that every man should have a right understanding of the Law and the Gospel; of himself, and of the state of condemnation and hopeless misery into which the sin of Adam brought him, and in which the Gospel finds him; of Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial character and grace, as the way by which sin-

ful man may draw nigh to God; and of the Spirit of Christ and his efficacious grace which worketh faith in the sinner's heart, and uniteth him to Christ; whereby he becometh a new creature, and is made to bear "the image of the heavenly." In regard to the rule of duty, too, there is great need of the faithful preaching of the Word, and there is need to your diligent, humble, prayerful, attendance upon it.

From what has been offered, you will perceive, 3dly, the reason why Christ and the overtures of his grace are made so light of. Alas! multitudes of professors seem to be awfully careless and secure; nor will they be easily roused from their dangerous slumbers. They mistake the very nature of religion; they mistake their own character; they are become vain in their imagination: "They trust in themselves that they are righteous," or think that a little more circumspection and devotion will make them so. They hope to make their peace with God, and apprehend there is little need of the great Peacemaker. While the poor and the needy, the broken and contrite in heart, receive the Gospel gladly, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, they cry, "Peace, peace!" and turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. "The full soul loatheth the honeycomb, while to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

Then, 4thly, it is great mercy when God is pleased by any means to shake the false confidence of men. Blessed affliction that rouses the slumbering mind from a false dream of security, and

thunders, "Thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways." Blessed alarm that constrains the formalist, perhaps after a delusion of many years, to rise and look about him, to see if all be safe! Blessed sermon or conversation, which, although like a bow drawn at a venture, is at once the occasion of the discovery and the cure of deadly disease! Blessed conviction, however distressful, which rends the soul from refuges of lies, and provokes an earnest cry to him who hath power to save! Blessed angel, whether from earth or heaven, who points to the storm gathering, seizes the loiterer's hand, and says, "Escape to the mountain!" Blessed violence, that thus plucks the brand out of the fire!

It remains, that we propose a remedy for this serious evil, in a few friendly counsels:—and the 1st is, Be well acquainted with the Word of God. Your own heart, your neighbour, your minister, *may* deceive you; but the Word of God is pure, eternal truth; it cannot deceive you. "Search the Scriptures:" search them with a humble, teachable, praying spirit: continually repair to this oracle, ask wisdom of God, and it will be given you. Yea, "if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

2. Examine carefully the grounds and reasons on which your heart would persuade you

that you are "something;" that you are interested in salvation: "Blessed is the man that feareth alway:" "He that trusteth his own heart, is a fool." "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Bring the grounds and reasons of your hope to the infallible touchstone: "prove your ownselves." Fear, lest any thing in yourself, instead of the Foundation which God has laid in Zion, should be the ground of your confidence. Fear, lest the reasons of your hope should be gathered from any thing which is not the effect of the Holy Spirit's saving work. Be faithful to your own soul.

3. If providence has put it in your power, attend constantly on a distinguishing, soul-searching ministry. False-hearted professors and hypocrites cannot endure it: they cannot bear the shining lustre, the convincing power, of the naked truth. They are little other than a terror to themselves, when at any time they are constrained to contemplate God and Christ and their own hearts in that faithful mirror: "Therefore they come not to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved." But if you would not deceive yourself, come to the light where it appears to be most pure and penetrating. Let the Word of the Lord have free course, and bear away every vain conceit and false confidence. Value the instructor whose preaching comes closest to your heart; who deals not tenderly, but faithfully, with

your errors and misconceptions and self-flattering conceits. Be willing to be "saved, though as by fire;" and though the fire still find more and more dross to consume, when the spirit of wisdom and power shall thus have tried you, you shall come forth as gold.

Finally: Be afraid of the flattering insinuations of self-love. Labour to lie low and vile in your own eyes; study much your own heart; contemplate humbling truths; think what you are, independent of what free grace has made you; lay yourself low before God, in self-abasing and grace-adoring confession: it is a posture becoming a saved sinner; it is a frame of mind that not only saves from the final horrors of self-deception, but places the child of want near the infinite source of supply, and secures to him the tenderest, fullest expressions of Divine love. "For thus saith the high and lofty ONE, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—Let this, then, be your language:

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.

SERMON V.

ISAIAH xl. 11.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

WE are here presented with a lovely representation of our blessed Redeemer, under the character of a Shepherd: and perhaps no character affords a more perfect description of his mediatorial greatness and grace. Majesty and mercy, power and compassion, are sweetly united here. Here is greatness to command our reverence; here is tenderness to draw our affection; and both to invite our confidence.

Our text will lead us to speak of our great Shepherd's government of *his flock generally:* and then of his particular regards to *the feeble of his flock.* Come, Holy Spirit, take of these things of Christ, and shew them unto us! then will our meditation of Him be sweet.

I. We have a representation of Christ exercising his pastoral office, in his regards to his flock generally: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd."

1. Christ's people are here represented under the metaphor of a flock of sheep.

They are a *select company;* "a chosen generation;" "chosen out of the world;" separated by God's effectual call, as Israel of old, from all the families of the earth, to be holy unto the Lord; *in* the world, but not *of* the world: in the world, as a flock of sheep in the same field with goats and swine;—a *little flock*—yet their protection sure, and their prospects glorious.

It were pleasant, would time admit, to dwell upon their excellencies, their cleanliness and purity, their meekness and harmony, their love and obedience to their Shepherd, their delight in his pastures, and their usefulness living and dying.

Yet some things are to be noticed with concern; the effects of infirmity and weakness. How soon they yield to the impression of fear! often their Shepherd expostulates, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?" Sometimes, this excess of timidity hurries them into real evil. Where one goes, others, urged by their fears, too hastily follow, implicitly, and without examination; nay, and deaf to friendly remonstrance, yielding to the influence of example.

2. Christ is the Shepherd who feeds this flock. We are not at a loss for an answer to the question,

"Of whom spake the prophet this?" The Lord Jesus, perhaps with particular reference to this passage, declared, "I am the good Shepherd." How the prophet Micah (ch. v. 4) celebrates his imperial greatness under this character! "He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the Name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth." The eternal Father, too, bears an equal testimony to his greatness, even in the depth of his humiliation: "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." (Zech. xiii. 7.) Happy flock that has such a Shepherd! How lively was the joy of David in this appropriation! "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

But we are constrained to rest a moment, to reply to a question or two belonging to this part of our subject.

1. *Where* are the pastures of Christ? "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon!" *Himself* answers the inquiry: "I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high *mountains of Israel* shall their fold be. There shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the *mountains of Israel*. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. xxxiv.

14, 15.) The mountains of Israel, in a Gospel sense, are wherever two, or three, or many, are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus; to seek, and serve, and honour him in the ordinances wherein he has promised his presence and his blessing. Here are the under-shepherds' tents; and here are the footsteps of the flock.

2. *What* are his pastures? Truly, they are rich and satisfying beyond all comparison: they are salutary and healing: they are suitable to every case: they are pleasurable and delightful beyond all expression: and, which is best of all, they are clothed with perpetual verdure, and shall not know when drought cometh. They are the promises of the Gospel, "exceeding great and precious:" the treasures of the covenant; a "covenant ordered in all things and sure:" the purchase of the Shepherd's dying agonies and blood; the unmeasurable fulness of his grace; the infinite sufficiency of God:—all applied, through the ordinances of the Gospel, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to every heart. These mountains of our Israel are refreshed and saturated with an abundant dew, "even as the dew of Hermon;—for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Ps. cxxxiii. 3.)

3. Whence is the Shepherd's propriety in these sheep? Beyond a doubt, they are his own. His tender care of them bespeaks it, in seeking that which is lost, and bringing again that which is

driven away, and binding up that which is broken; and strengthening that which is weak. It is evident, likewise, in the joy with which he returns with the sheep he had lost, bearing it on his shoulder, and calling on heaven and earth to rejoice with him. —But how came these sheep to be his own?

By the Father's designation and appointment they are His: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." And *they are His by his own purchase:* "The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." His title is good. His love to them is stronger than death. Their hope, therefore, is an anchor sure and stedfast. "For, if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. v. 10.) But I hasten to enter on the consideration—

II. Of the pastoral care our gracious Shepherd exercises towards the feeble of his flock: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm," &c.

I can apprehend very little difficulty in stating,

1st, Who they are whom the Holy Spirit means to represent under these characters of infirmity and weakness.

They are little children, in their helpless infancy. Such tender regards our Lord condescended to shew them when upon earth, that we cannot hesitate to comprehend them among the lambs of his flock. He seemed to have found the odour of sweet incense in this offering presented by their loving pa-

rents: "And he took them up in his arms, and put his hands upon them and blessed them, and said, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" Their Hosannas hailed his public entry into Jerusalem, and resounded in the temple. And while scribes and priests blasphemed, "Jesus saith unto them, Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" Many of them his almighty grace has made conquerors, yea, and more than conquerors, even over the king of terrors.

Again—They are children in knowledge and experience of the word and ways of God;—"newborn babes desiring the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby;"—young converts, who have neither knowledge nor strength to go alone; who need the sustaining arm, and the fostering bosom, of parental tenderness;—children of grace, who are just learning to lisp out, "Abba, Father!"

Further—They are meek and lowly disciples; such as, are "converted and become as little children;"—the "poor in spirit," whose "is the kingdom of heaven;"—such as, feeling their weakness, go with trembling, and crave a Saviour's arm to lean upon.

The tender mercies of the Lord Jesus Christ are exercised likewise, towards *tried believers*, who groan, being burdened with their peculiar griefs and cares. "He shall gently lead those that are with young." Those, especially, are meant who are op-

pressed with outward afflictions and troubles, and the infirmities of declining life; or, with inward corruptions, temptations and fears, darkness and doubts. Such characters as these have need of forbearance and mercy.

2dly, Let us contemplate (though description must ever fail to illustrate) the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ represented in these tender expressions, *He shall gather the lambs with his arm.* What is the grace of the Saviour, that is shadowed forth in this figure?

1. Perhaps it is to represent the gracious manner in which the Lord Jesus will invite and draw sinners, especially young sinners, away from the danger to which he sees them exposed, and bring them to himself. He saw the sin and misery of mankind when no eye pitied—when there was none, none beside, to help.

> He saw, and, O amazing love!
> He ran to our relief!

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." What was he not prepared to do and to suffer?

> When hell, with its tremendous flame,
> Stood dreadful in his way;
> To save a sinking world he plunged,
> And bore the prize away.

And still, what loud importunity, what affectionate entreaty, what condescending ways he employs to win precious souls to himself! "How often

would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" It is possible, my dear young friends, some of you may be able to trace expressions of this grace in your own experience. Perhaps there have been times when the Saviour has called you as if by name. You felt, and cannot forget, the impression of the call; but, like the child Samuel, not yet knowing the Lord, you were at a loss how to reply. You heard his grace, his loveliness, his preciousness, and tender mercies, described, till your heart felt desires to which it had been a stranger;—the pulse of your affections warmly beat towards him. Yet, you little suspected that the Spirit of Jesus himself stood knocking at your door.

At other times, you have attended to a faithful representation of the sin and misery of an unconverted state, till you have seen, as in a mirror, your own likeness. You heard the solemn charge, "Thou art the man!" Your thoughts troubled you. You were "ashamed, yea, even confounded, because" you "did bear the reproach of" your "youth." Little thinking that the *Comforter* was so near, importunately urging, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest!"

Sometimes, you have listened to the representation of the peaceful, happy state, of a pardoned, justified believer; the pleasures of religion in life, the supports of religion in death, and the blessedness and glory of saints in heaven, till Christ appear-

ed "the pearl of great price;" every desire of your heart seemed to centre in him; and you thought you could gladly relinquish every prospect of creature-bliss, to make that pearl your own. The Friend of sinners claims your praise:—"I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love."

You have attended to the affecting circumstances of the Saviour's agony and death; you have sat at the foot of his cross, gazing on him who was wounded for your transgressions, till your affections flowed in grief and tears. Representations of the unmeasurable fulness and sufficiency of his grace, and his willingness to receive and save sinners, have inspired you with hope. And when you have heard that kind assurance, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," your heart has seemed to yield to the heavenly vision; yet you wanted to know where, and how you should come. Blessed Jesus! who thus draws and "gathers the lambs with his arm."

2. Perhaps it is intended to represent the gracious power by which the Lord Jesus overcomes impediments in the way of the sinner's return, and makes him willing.

It was foretold of our Shiloh, "unto him shall the gathering of the people be." By nature, they are in an awful degree "afar off;" "without hope, and without God in the world:" nay, and "dead in trespasses and sins," "the wrath of God abideth upon" them. But, "if any man be in Christ Jesus,

he is a new creature." His power regenerates, and raises them to spiritual life. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live:" John v. 25. "He that sitteth upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new:" Rev. xxi. 5. The second Adam is made a "quickening spirit." His influence, through the gift and operation of a Divine faith, brings the soul into union with himself; a union never to be dissolved. Thus is produced the creation and spiritual birth of a child into Christ's family, a lamb in his flock. But the life of grace, in the heart of a renewed sinner, will have to sustain a very hard conflict. The interest of the world, and sin, and Satan, and self, will not quietly yield to the claims of Jesus. Many things will be presented to him, who has felt the power of Christ in the word, to shake his resolution and hold him back.

The *evil things of the world*, in some cases especially, have great influence. Though the terror of prisons, and stripes, and flames, be far removed; yet there is a great deal to shake the resolution of an infant disciple in—the reproach of singularity—the ridicule and sneer of the profane—the displeasure of near friends—and the threatened resentment of superiors. Alas, what would become of the feeble and fearful lamb, were it not for the gathering arm of the Shepherd! It is the conquering power of Christ alone that, under such circumstances as

these, can constrain obedience to that command, "Deny thyself, and take up thy cross."

The good things of the world, too, have great influence. When those who, from education and connections, have been familiar with scenes of gay dissipation, and are still encircled with wealth and honour, and all "the pride of life," are seen to turn their backs on all, resolved to follow Jesus, it is no small conquest: the gathering arm of the Shepherd is to be acknowledged here.

Evil habits, likewise, formed in very early life; habits of thinking, speaking, and acting contrary to the Divine rule; habits confirmed by early prejudice against a holy life, by prevailing custom and example, and by the corruption of the heart, that abundant fountain of evil—these are strong holds of Satan, which no weapons but those that are "mighty through God" can destroy.

And to all these is to be added, *the natural aversion of the heart of man to the method of salvation, as revealed in the Gospel.* We have, in our very nature, a strong bias to the covenant of works. Affected with a representation of the love of Christ, the mind of man will much more readily determine on reformation and obedience, than to rest upon Him alone for salvation. Convinced of the necessity of reconciliation with God, it will have recourse to duty; it will flee any where for refuge, rather than to the hope set before us in the Gospel; or at best, it will be willing to compound with Christ, and

yield to him but a share in the honour of salvation. The pride of the human heart is such, that man disdains to "submit to the righteousness of God," to deny and take shame to himself, and to "place no confidence in the flesh." The obedience of faith, in such a creature as man, is no easy attainment. It is the effect of the exceeding greatness of that power which "commanded the light to shine out of darkness," and which "raised Jesus Christ from the dead." But when the "arm of the Lord is revealed," the heart is opened, like Lydia's, to new apprehensions and affections: mystery no longer obscures the Gospel—it is all wonderful; it is all delightful; and so plain, that "he that runs may read." The force of truth prevails against all prejudice. Nay, it is with heart-felt joy the sinner now beholds in Christ all he wants; the righteousness, the grace, the strength, the consolation, the heaven he wants. All his desire is towards him. "What things were gain to me," he cries, (referring to his virtues, his privileges, his duties, his attainments, and his righteousness, of which he had been so proud,) "these I count loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him." He obeys from the heart the form of doctrine into which he has been delivered; as the metal into the mould, or as the clay is turn-

ed to the seal: and now, his very soul is won to the interest and service of Christ. The Shepherd's love, the drawing of the Shepherd's arm has made an entire conquest. "In vain the world accosts his ear:" its glory is departed. "In vain the sons of earth and hell tell him a thousand frightful things." "Lord, I will follow thee," with ready zeal he cries, "whithersoever thou goest." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

Thus the Shepherd "gathers the lambs with his arm." The expression may likewise denote,

3. The ready and effectual aid which the Lord Jesus affords the heaven-born soul, in the feeble actings of infant life.

The Christian soon finds, that there is no help in himself. He *would*, but *cannot*. In the light of the Law, his astonished mind beholds his crimes so multiplied, and so aggravated, his heart so vile, that he is discouraged from entertaining any hope from the atoning blood or sanctifying grace of the Saviour. He would *believe*, but cannot; he would, but cannot, *repent;* he would remember his ways, and be abased and humbled; he would remember a Saviour's dying agonies, and feel his heart dissolve in grief and tears: but his grief is, that he cannot grieve; his heart is adamant; it is a rock of ice; he can utter words of penitence, but he wants penitent affections.

So it is with reference to *prayer*. He would, but cannot pray; feels cold and formal; and cannot "stir up himself to take hold of God." There wants the wrestling importunity of a soul in earnest to obtain salvation.

All these are circumstances which give occasion for the display of the gracious power of the Lord Jesus. "He giveth power to the faint;" he reveals his personal glories, his mediatorial fulness, and says to them that are of a fearful heart, "Be strong;" "go in this thy strength." He speaks in the Gospel, and then it is with power: "Come!" he says, and reveals his arm; and the sinner is "no longer faithless, but believing." It is easy, it is delightful, then to come: he "findeth rest to his soul."

Now "faith worketh by love;" and love melts his heart in grief. He feels as Peter felt, when "Jesus turned and looked upon" him. He feels as the inhabitants of Jerusalem felt, when they "looked on him whom they had pierced." No longer does he want a praying heart: "he weeps and makes supplication:" his mouth is open, his heart is enlarged: "and by his strength," new derived from the Shepherd's arm, "he hath power with God."

We have once more to remark,

4. Perhaps this tender expression denotes the ready protection and firm security which the Lord Jesus will grant a feeble believer that comes trembling unto him. Many occasions of distressful sur-

prize and terror may be suffered to befal a returning sinner, in his inquiries after salvation. The commandment comes, in such a discovery of its spirituality and awful sanctions as shakes his former confidence. Sin revives, and with irresistible fierceness appears ready to devour. "Mine iniquities," he cries, "have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of my head: therefore, my heart faileth me." Trembling, yet hoping, he adds, "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me. O Lord, make haste to help me!" "The Gospel bears his spirit up." It is a transporting discovery, "He hath made *him* to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in *him*." Behold an effectual asylum, and an open door! There the Saviour stands, with an aspect of mingled majesty and mercy. Grace drops from his lips: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" "Let not your heart be troubled;" "look unto me, and be ye saved." Come to my bosom, and lay thy trembling heart at rest: "Fear not, I have redeemed thee!" And while he speaks, he "gathers the lambs with his arm:" he strengthens the sinner's faith, and fills him with all joy and peace in believing.

Sometimes the *world* assumes a frowning and wrathful appearance. The disciple of Jesus finds himself, like a defenceless sheep, a feeble lamb among savage beasts of prey. But "God is a very present help in trouble." Israel trembled when

the Egyptian host, with mighty rage, pursued them. But the Lord was their Shepherd, and, in a wondrous way, gathered them with his arm. So the disciples, when they saw the powers of earth and hell ready to devour them, were affrighted and fled. But Jesus saw, and pitied their wanderings: like a tender Shepherd, "he gathered them with his arm;" restored their souls; kindled a fresh glow of affection and zeal in their breasts; brought them to the foot of his cross; and, by the sweet constraints of his love, bound them for ever to his heart. Blessed Shepherd, who gathers the affrighted lambs with his arm! and blessed troubles, that constrain us to turn into our strong hold! So "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." So Stephen, when his battered tabernacle was falling in ruins, cried, nor cried in vain, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Solemn moment, when *death* appears! When the soul must loose from earth, burst its strongest, dearest ties, and launch into a vast, unknown, untried eternity! What shall a graceless unbeliever do? "In vain to heaven he lifts his eye!" He has no treasure, no friend, no Saviour there. In the horror of despair, he "is driven away in his wickedness." It is otherwise with the sheep of Christ's pasture: the tender care of the good Shepherd is then exercised at the time it is most needed; it enables the feeble lamb to be bold as a lion, and to sustain, undaunted, the horrors of dissolution: the

work is all easy, it is all delightful, when He appears. The vision of his glory dissipates the gloom of death; the grace of his lips overcomes reluctance, and even enflames desire; the feeble lamb falls into the opened arms of the Shepherd, sweetly exulting, "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

There is another expression, designed to represent the Shepherd's tender mercies to the lambs of his flock: it is said, *He shall carry them in his bosom.*

1. It expresses the sure *protection* which the Lord Jesus will afford his infant disciples. However feeble and inexperienced, however fearful and otherwise exposed, he will keep them in perfect security. No subtle serpent shall seduce them, however artful and numerous his devices. No roaring lion shall devour them, however terrifying his appearance. "Their Redeemer is mighty, the Lord of hosts is his name." He has "all power in heaven and on earth." He has "given commandment to save them."

His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep.

Therefore has he fully and graciously declared, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." Nay, he will "carry them in his bosom," determined that, while he "lives, they shall live also." Happy flock! Not gates of brass, not walls of fire, not a munition of rocks, could guard them so well.

2. It is expressive of the tender and gracious manner in which the Lord Jesus will cherish infant life in a child of God. The babe in Christ has life, but very feeble life; an immortal principle, but oppressed with much remaining sin. Its apprehensions are prevailingly just, but clouded with much darkness and error; its infirmities are many, and need much forbearance; its actions are feeble; its prejudices strong; its conflict hard; its preservation a continued miracle. It cannot bear rigorous requirements of duty, the fierce blast of temptation, the fury of the oppressor, or the just rebukes of fatherly displeasure. How consoling, then, the thought that, though nature change, and the nursing mother cease to have compassion on the fruit of her womb, yet the Lord our Shepherd can never forget his lambs. He will not leave them exposed to chilling frosts; to the wiles or rage of the enemy: nor will he treat them with severity or neglect. No; but he will tenderly watch over them: he will with meekness instruct them: "he will carry them in his bosom," and, with much forbearance and tenderness, will nourish and cherish their feeble life.

3. It denotes the tender consolations with which the Lord Jesus will express the love of his heart to his young disciples. They are precious in his sight, the dear purchase of his blood, the children of his grace: they are his bosom-charge, and he will make them his bosom-friends: "he will shew them his covenant;" he will open his heart

of love to them. When their griefs abound, he will smile, and wipe their tears away: when terrors alarm, he will say to their troubled minds, "Be not afraid, it is I!"—"He shall carry them in his bosom." No language of mortals can fully describe the gracious privilege shadowed forth in this delightful figure; the condescending affection of the Shepherd; the security, the serenity, and blessedness, of a young disciple of Jesus, conducted through life and through death to eternal joys, like a feeble lamb carried in the Shepherd's bosom. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him."

But the best comment on these words is often found in experience and fact. Bear with me, my dear hearers: I have to represent this character and grace of the blessed Lord Jesus, as exemplified in experience; to shew you the Shepherd "gathering the lamb with his arm, and" tenderly "carrying" it "in his bosom."

I should not take up your time in telling you of what has occurred in a distant county, had not the child to whom it relates been near and dear to some, and known to most, of us;—or rather, had not the circumstances themselves been calculated to render the Saviour more known and more endeared to us all.

A fever, which lately has been prevalent in the town of Hull, was suffered to arrest this dear child. Circumstances encouraged the hope of recovery,

till the expected crisis arrived. An unfavourable change then took place, and notices of dissolution quickly appeared. Her feeble frame, however, was dissolved in as easy and gentle a manner, and with as little suffering, as can well be imagined. In this respect, the gracious Shepherd tenderly "gathered" her "with his arm," and carried "her in his bosom."

Blessed be his Name, he did more, much more than this: He strengthened her in her soul "with all might by his Spirit." He made "the feeble to become as David." He enabled this child, not yet eleven years old, to enter the list against "the king of terrors," like a veteran, and to triumph gloriously. So powerfully did he "gather" this "lamb with his arm," and so sweetly carry her "in his bosom," that the strongest ties that had bound her heart to earthly joys were dissolved. Amidst loving and weeping parents and friends, death was more than welcome. With her face deliberately fixed Zionward, she had "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which" she esteemed "far better." She had been a child of many prayers. She was cast upon God from the womb. In parental affection, sanctified and directed to her everlasting interest, God was pleased to furnish her with those means which, under his blessing, have the happiest influence on the infant mind. At a very early period, as was said of John the Baptist, it seemed as if "the hand of the Lord"

were upon her. Her habitual watchfulness against sin, especially the appearance of falsehood; her filial subjection and affectionate obedience; her attention to religious instruction, and the interest she evidently felt in the subjects unfolded to her; her constancy and manifest fervour in prayer; the pleasure she evidently found in the duties of the Sabbath; and the seriousness, the reverence, and delight, with which her mind appeared to bear a part in public devotions, were so many encouraging indications of the grace of God in her.

In her illness, her mind was wonderfully placid; fully satisfied with the will of God, and thankful for his mercies. On her last Sabbath, her desire was towards the sanctuary, and, though sensible of her inability to walk, she would fain have been taken thither. When heart and flesh availed no more, the only solicitude she expressed was to be assisted in rising for prayer. When languishing nature sunk in slumbers, her mind was active, and prayer was her employ. Some of her cries were heard, "O Lord, do not—!" "O Lord, do not—!" "—Set free!" "—Set free!" The evening before her departure, when her father was giving her medicine, finding her unwilling to take the whole, he reasoned: "My dear, it is to make you better." It seems, she had deliberately made her choice, and therefore readily replied, "I had rather have salvation!" "I love salvation!" repeating, "I had rather have salvation!" The next and last morning, fast languishing into life

with a countenance expressive of peculiar satisfaction, she said "——where I wish to be!" She seemed to have prefaced, though not to be distinctly understood, "*I shall soon be* where I wish to be!" However, she repeated "—— where I wish to be!" During the day, she appeared to be much engaged in prayer. At one time, with remarkable fervency of spirit, with her hands closed, and her eyes fixed heavenwards, she was clearly heard to say, "Thy will be done!" Wondrous utterance of an infant mind! What could age and experience, matured even to gray hairs, say more? What but the strength of the Shepherd's arm, and the consolations of the Shepherd's bosom, could have enabled this lamb to say so much? Just before her release, when her father had again been giving her medicine, expecting that he wished to give her more, with a mind evidently reconciled to the will of God, she begged her father not to disturb her, saying,—"I am going—I know I am going." As the moment of separation approached she appeared restless, and continuing so for a time, her father offered a short and fervent prayer, affectionately committing her into the hands of the faithful Redeemer. During this exercise, she became quite composed, as if bearing a part. And while he entreated, "Lord Jesus, receive her spirit!" the request was granted; the conflict ceased; the Shepherd who "had gathered the lamb with his arm," tenderly lodged her in his bosom; and she went to heaven to sing in delightful

strains his power and grace: "I was brought low, and the Lord helped me!" Gathered from the paw of the lion and the bear, how sweet the repose she has found! how rich the content, the joy, the transport, she feels! "I shall never forget," a near relative writes, "the delightful serenity that rested on her countenance in the moment of departure; and which lingered there after the spirit had fled.

Lovely in death, the beauteous ruin lies.

Were I now called to address the parents of such a child, I should regard commiseration as out of season. Indeed, I should prefer congratulation to condolence. Though their hearts were united to this dear child, with bonds as strong as nature ever framed, I could not wonder if, under such an exhibition of Divine love, they became like Sampson's cords when the Spirit of God was upon him. They have a rich return of prayer. They have a joyful and abundant harvest, to crown the labour of their souls in a careful weeping seed time. Here is a precious jewel safely lodged, "where thieves never break through and steal." Here is the sheaf of first fruits, raised and waved heavenward in the hands of the great High-priest. Who can estimate the blessing it may bring down on all the remaining fruits; sanctified, shall I say, by this solemn act! The Lord bless them all, as one is already blest! Here is the promise of a faithful God displayed, like an unsearchable mine, opening in treasures for

ever satisfying and delightful; "better than gold, yea, than much fine gold."

Ten years ago, this child, in this place, was dedicated to God, in the ordinance of baptism. And on Him, on whom resteth "all the glory of his Father's house," did we then, by humble faith and prayer, hang this "offspring and issue." Nor did we then believe and pray in vain.

> Tell of his wond'rous faithfulness,
> And sound his power abroad:
> Sing the sweet promise of his grace,
> And the performing God.

Brethren, we mention these particulars, not to do honour to this dear child, or her parents. The one does not need it; the others would not desire it. But "I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us." I would fix your admiring, believing eye, on Jesus; "how full of grace, how full of truth!"

May we not challenge infidelity to say, "What but a supernatural influence could have so fully overcome, in this child, the fear of death, and produced this sweet serenity in dying?" And witnessing such a scene, could the most trifling spirit help confessing, There is no friend like Jesus! no consolations like his! No guardian arms afford equal security and delight!

Then, away with the world, and all its flattering vanities; its delusive riches, and honours, and plea-

sures, that would thrust him from your heart, in whom such treasures of sweetness are found; found even in death.

Parents, what a family God is here! What a guardian for your dear children! His perfection, his promise, his grace, his truth, his heaven, all invite you! Then open your house, and open your heart unto *Him:* embrace his promise, and, with affectionate importunity, present your dear charge before him: they are precious in his sight: he will receive them as his own. He will "gather them with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."

Happy, happy, are you, my dear children, if you have parents who love your souls and seek your salvation; who see with deep concern the evil to which you are exposed; who bring you in arms of faith and love to Jesus; and while they long and labour for your salvation, look up for the spirit and blessing which God hath promised. But if you have not such parents, yet there is one near you, in whom is infinite compassion. If you seek Him, he will be found of you. He hears with delight the cries of little children. He will be a gracious Shepherd, a loving Father, to you. It is his own promise, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me *early* shall find me."

But we must not forget, that it is also said of Israel's Shepherd, "He shall gently lead those that are with young;" or, as in the margin, "that give suck." It has been already observed, that the in-

firm, the afflicted, the tempted, those who are oppressed with age and infirmities, with doubts and fears and griefs, are here meant.

The Lord Jesus will mercifully consider their frailties in the service he requires; in the cross and suffering he calls them to bear. He will, also, very graciously proportion his supports and comforts to the day of their duty or suffering. Our Lord, foretelling the calamities coming upon Jerusalem, says, "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days," Matt. xxiv. 19. Jacob offers this apology for declining to keep pace with Esau; "My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die," Gen. xxxiii. 13. This is but a faint illustration of the tenderness of our heavenly Shepherd. "In all their affliction, he was afflicted: and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and his pity he redeemed them: and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old," Isa. lxiii. 9. "And even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you," Isa. xlvi. 4. So merciful a Saviour is Jesus! Happy flock, which is under the care of such a Shepherd! happy on earth; for "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust," Ps. ciii. 13: happier still in heaven;

for there "the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 17.

We shall close with one remark more.

Having heard of the grace of the chief Shepherd, must we not consider that promise to the several divisions of the flock very precious; "I will give you pastors *according to mine heart*," Jer. iii. 15. Such was the church blessed with, in Paul and other apostles and teachers: they "naturally cared for" their "state;" they had drank into the spirit of their great Master. "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children," 1 Thess. ii. 7. "Brethren, pray for us," and for all the Lord's ministers, that they may be filled with his gracious, loving, holy Spirit, and practically and fully declare, "We have the mind of Christ."

CHARGES.

A

CHARGE,

DELIVERED

AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. RICHARD BOWDEN,

AUG. 15, 1799.

IT is impossible but that I should feel deeply interested in the solemn transactions of this day. I have cordial satisfaction in the designation that has taken place, and the confession which preceded it. It behoves me, with heartfelt gratitude, to acknowledge the God of my mercies therein: "He will ever be mindful of his covenant."

Now, my son, I have to address you as my brother in the Gospel—I have to congratulate you as "a servant of Jesus Christ:" you need not, you cannot, aspire after a title and character more truly honourable. May it ever be your ambition to wear that inscription stamped on your brow, and to demonstrate to all around you, in the fervour of your Christian affection and zeal, and in your self-denying and unwearied labours, that you are truly "a servant of Jesus Christ."

At your request, I appear on this solemn occa-

sion, to offer you the admonitions of parental and Christian love. There were considerations that would have recommended the appointment of some other person, and I felt their force; but nothing of this kind had I power to decline, for "being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also ourselves, because ye were dear unto us." You feel the importance of the trust reposed in you; I pray God you may feel it more and more; that your eye and your heart may ever be fixed on your work, your Master, and your reward; that you may be ever watchful, depending, and prayerful.

The plain and serious hints I have to offer shall be grounded on the Apostle Paul's advice to his son Timothy, 2d Timothy ii. 15.: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

The words lead me to remind you of the character which you are now to sustain: "A workman, a steward:"—then, of that excellency of character which I hope it will be your ambition to deserve: "A workman that needeth not to be ashamed;" a steward, "rightly" (that is, faithfully and skilfully,) "dividing the word of truth;" a workman, and a steward, "approved unto God." A few considerations and counsels may afterwards be offered, to urge your very serious attention to this apostolic charge: "Study to shew thyself approv-

ed unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." And may the good Spirit of God, who alone can teach us to profit, afford to each of us his effectual presence and grace!

I. You are here reminded of the character in which you will now appear: A Workman! God calls his ministers to a life, not of indolence and indulgence, but of labour. Here is labour for your body, and labour for your soul; but it is labour which glorious angels would esteem their honour; it is labour worthy of a God. The reference is to the great design of God's eternal mercy, to deliver sinners of mankind from darkness, sin, and death, and bring many sons and daughters to glory. This is represented under a variety of metaphors: two of them are particularly applicable. Sometimes, the God of salvation appears in the character of a Husbandman, who applies himself to the cultivation of a degenerate and neglected soil; and exchanges the dreary and comfortless appearance of a desert, for the delights of a garden, the luxuriance of autumn, and the joy of harvest. At other times, he is pleased to assume the character of an Architect, a Builder, who, of materials gathered from a ruined world, "a world lying in wickedness," raises, on a living Foundation Stone, a holy temple, a habitation of God, which shall survive the wreck of worlds, and stand eternal in the heavens.

The great Head of the church, who is the only Efficient in this work of mercy, is pleased to make use of the instrumentality of frail men, to whom he giveth a measure of his own Spirit. "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ."

Here, then, is your work: as an instrument in God's hand, and according to the measure of the Spirit of Christ given you, to cultivate the desart of man's degenerate mind;—sometimes labouring, by the terrors of the Law, to break up the fallow ground; and then, by proclaiming the grace of the Gospel, to cast in the precious seed, to furnish fresh materials for the spiritual temple, and build them up a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. What a noble design! What an honour, to serve such a Master, and to contribute, in any measure, and in any view, to its progress!

Another character in which you are to appear, is that of a Steward; to whom it belongs to divide the word of truth. You have a household to superintend, as "a steward of the manifold grace of God;" a family and a flock of Christ to feed. A trust of high importance is committed to you. Remember, the food you are to dispense is "the word of truth." This character eminently belongs to the Gospel, "the Gospel of the grace of God:"

the declaration and overtures of the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ, unto the salvation of all that believe. The Gospel which was first revealed in Paradise; the Gospel which the ancient Patriarchsbelieved and embraced, and in the faith of which they died; the Gospel which Jesus sealed in his death, and left as his last testament, a bequest of soul-enriching blessings, for the benefit of lost, perishing sinners; giving it in charge to his apostles and ministers, to "preach repentance and remission of sins amongst all nations, beginning at Jerusalem:"—"the everlasting Gospel:" you can rely upon it as "the word of truth," and represent it, on the fullest demonstration, on the testimony of a cloud of witnesses, as "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."

This is the food, and the life, of precious souls. The "word of God is tried."

Your office, as a minister of Christ, is, to "divide the word of truth." To divide the word of truth, is to explain it; to unfold, to the understanding of your hearers, its plain sense and meaning; to represent the connection and harmony of "the truth as it is in Jesus;" to unfold it in its excellence and importance; to open the treasures of consolation contained in it, for the relief and delight of needy, perishing souls; and earnestly to recommend it to their believing acceptation, giving to every one his own portion.

II. Let me remind you of the excellency of cha-

racter which it will, I trust, be your ambition to deserve: "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."—When may it be said of a minister, that he needeth not to be ashamed? I answer:

1. When he appears to be deeply taught of God: skilful in God's word. Bezaleel was a distinguished workman in framing the tabernacle in the wilderness; for "the Lord called him, and filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." And such were Peter, and Paul, and Barnabas, in the Gospel-church:—men who saw, in a strong light, the exceeding sinfulness of sin; the misery of mankind under the power of darkness; and the crafty wiles of the old serpent to secure his captives:—men who saw, with open face, the glory of the Lord in his moral character, and in his unsearchable riches; who, "knowing the terrors of the Lord," felt an earnest desire, and attained the happy art, to "persuade men." They knew how to speak a word in season to the bold transgressor, and the artful hypocrite; to the proud Pharisee, and the trembling penitent; and to the afflicted conscience, in seasons of temptation and desertion. O! be it your care to be "skilful in the word;" to know the Gospel; to have a clear understanding of Divine truth; to be deeply learned in Christian experience; to be well acquainted with God's various workings on the minds of men, by his word, and by his providence. "Know your work,"

2. When he has the testimony of his own conscience, and that of others, to his diligence and self-denying labours in the work assigned him. O! study to lay open your very soul in your work; and let the people of your charge plainly see your inward strong affection, in the painful labours by which you seek their good. Do not set limits to your active services, and think of doing no more than your engagements with your people require. Remember, you serve the Lord Jesus. Serve Him with your spirit, and then you will never think you have done enough, till you have rendered unto him according to the immeasurable obligations his grace has laid you under; till you "love the Lord with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

Never stoop to serve your temporal interests, by the mean arts of flattery. Let no worldly prudence restrain you from the faithful ministration of Divine Truth. Let the Word of God have its "free course." Let it be your ambition to be able to say with a good grace, in a solemn appeal to the consciences of your people, "We seek not yours, but you." And if you have to do with ingenuous minds, their consciousness of the purity of your intentions will stimulate them to every due and grateful return. You will have, moreover, inexpressible satisfaction in leaving your work with your Master. He will never fail to care for those who serve him with singleness of heart. Set Paul's example before you, and covet the

heartfelt satisfaction which an address to the people of your charge, like that of his to the elders of Ephesus, must secure;—"Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations . . . and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house . . . Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." Herein you will find "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."—A minister need not to be ashamed,

3. When his skill and laborious diligence are seen in his works themselves: "Let thy works praise thee."

It is, I trust, by the special direction of the providence of God that your lot is cast in this part of his husbandry; and here, you are apprized, a great deal of labour will be required. Here is ground, that has long lain fallow, to be broken up, and cleared of thorns and briars and injurious weeds; hence, if you would "eat bread," it must be "in the sweat of your brow." Ignorance and vice, in many deplorable instances, may offer a strong resistance to your most painful labours. You may meet with heart-breaking discouragements: your most flattering hopes may be blasted; Satan may catch away the seed you sow from Sabbath to Sabbath, or from year to year, or thorns and briars may choke it: blind-

ness of mind and hardness of heart, the love of the world and the love of sin, may resist the labours of your soul: but remember, to labour is yours; "to give the increase" is God's. Remember the promise too: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Persevering labour, prompted by the love of Christ, and directed with a single eye to God's glory, will not fail, in God's time, and in God's way, of an ample return. Remember, and look upward, with longing desire and prayer, till from the Throne of God that high command shall proceed; "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together." Should it please God to give you a labouring soul—a soul that shall travail in birth for the people of your charge, until "Christ be formed in them," it will be a happy omen of such a blessing. And under the influence of such a blessing, what a delightful change may soon appear! "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desart shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing." Where ignorance and profaneness, the love of the world, and the practice of vice in all its hateful forms, are now found, you may be delighted in seeing "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord," the fear of God, the love of God, and the

practice of universal holiness. The diffusing of the savour of Jesus' name, in your ministry, may one day be effectual to the quickening and salvation of many souls that are now "dead in trespasses and sins;" and you may live and die an acknowledged blessing to the country around you.

It is recorded of Mr. Richard Baxter, that "when he went to Kidderminster, he found the place like a piece of dry and barren earth. Ignorance and profaneness, as natives of the soil, grew very luxuriant; but, by the blessing of God upon his labour and cultivating, the face of paradise appeared there in all the fruits of righteousness. Rage and malice created him much opposition at first, but at length his unwearied pains were crowned with unexpected success." What honour is done him in the following part of this testimony! "When he first came thither, there might perhaps be a family in a street that worshipped God; but when he came away, there was not above a family on the side of a street that did not do it." "He had six hundred communicants; and there were but few families in the whole town but what submitted to his private catechising and personal conference." Ah! how the glory of an Alexander or a Cæsar vanishes in the lustre of such beneficence as this! What a ground of rejoicing will you have, living and dying, if any thing like so plentiful an harvest should crown your labours here!

You will have an interior plantation—a garden

enclosed—a church of professing Christians, avowedly separated from the world, who have said unto Jesus, "Lord, we will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." May God grant a large increase of their number!—of those who truly live by faith in the Son of God; "plants of his own right hand planting!" Yet let not your solicitude for increased numbers lead to hasty and injudicious admissions. "Look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." When members of churches appear ignorant of God's method of salvation, and have not received the truth in the love of it; when they are worldly-minded, sensual, not having the Spirit; especially, when their outward walk demonstrates to all around them that they are under the dominion of vile affections and lusts; the reputation of religion suffers, humble inquirers are discouraged, the Spirit of God is grieved, and we are not to wonder if the curse of barrenness appear awfully and effectually to resist laborious toil, and disappoint every expectation.

Let not the Head of the Church, in this respect, have to reply to your prayers and your tears, "I have somewhat against thee." If the abomination of desolation be set up in the temple, "the glory is departed." If you would invite him into his garden, it must be cleansed; the wild gourd must not occupy the place of the noble vine. The Church of Christ, in her stedfast opposition to sin, must be

"terrible as an army with banners." And when this is the case, she will, in the glory which Christ puts upon her, be "fair as the moon, clear as the sun." Be it your care that such be the character of the church over which you are made overseer. You will find those, I trust, among its members who "will strengthen your hands in God." Some you will find capable of filling an important office, and going hand in hand with you in the good work; and all, I hope, will see and remember, that "the temple of the Lord" must be "holy, which temple ye are."

According to the measure of the Spirit of Christ given you, you are called to labour in edifying and beautifying the church of the living God. Be solicitous that your skill and your labour appear in the choice and in the use of the aptest expedients, whereby to recover from nature's ruins materials for the Lord's temple. Be it your concern that these materials, prepared, and improved, and rightly disposed, shew that you are a *workman;* "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." And let your skill especially appear in securing the union of every stone with the Foundation; for whatever in this building does not rest on that living Stone, so as to be sustained and enlivened thereby; however specious and beautiful it may for a while appear in the eyes of beholders, will be washed away and perish when the floods shall come and the storms arise.

In near connection with this sentiment stands another excellency of the ministerial character

you have to aspire to;—a steward, "rightly dividing the word of truth." "It is required of a steward, that a man be found faithful." Be it your solicitude *rightly* to divide the word of truth.—This comprehends several particulars of important counsel.

1. See to it that the *doctrine* you preach be the "word of truth." May you never be "of them who corrupt the word of God;" who preach another gospel. You will never, I hope, be satisfied with amusing your audience with dry speculations or mere moral essays. You come to open to them the purpose and the grace of God from everlasting; to represent unto them the provision and operation of that grace; to speak to them "words by which they may be saved." You come with a treaty of reconciliation; to publish to them an assurance, that "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and, "in Christ's stead," to beseech them to be "reconciled to God."

Then "search the Scriptures." You have in them a plain and simple revelation from Heaven. It is of universal concernment, and of everlasting importance, and therefore suited to every capacity. You have there a certain and determinate, an infallible and unalterable, rule of faith. Fully satisfied, therefore, of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, "let every thought bow and adore." Keep back nothing of God's truth. Let every part have its

due weight. Examine the records of the church, and you will gather thence, that true religion, in the internal and essential parts of it, has been, in all ages and countries, the same: that patriarchs and prophets, Jews and Gentiles, apostles and martyrs, have drank into the same spirit, and been influenced by the same precious truth, though under different degrees of discovery.

Especially sit at the feet of Jesus. There, you will best gain "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:" there you will receive the most impressive discoveries of his glory and his love: and thereby you will be treasuring up the cordial satisfaction which Paul, under future discouragements, found in that reflection:—"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling: and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

2. Take heed that you dispense the word of truth in the most *clear* and *convincing manner*.

Appear to *labour* in the word and doctrine, and let the particular subjects you discourse of be well

digested; the fruit of close thought and study; and well supported by the testimony of Scripture. "Let no man despise thy youth."

3. Be it your concern to dispense the word of truth in the most serious and importunate, in the most affectionate and edifying, manner. Not barely as one who has studied divinity in the schools of the prophets, but as one who is savingly taught of God; who hath "seen with his eyes, who hath looked upon, and whose hands have handled of the word of life:" as one who deeply feels his subject, and who labours to speak to the understanding and to the heart.

4. Be careful to give *to every one his own portion*. Avoid a general and undistinguishing form of address. Consider well the character and condition of those to whom you speak. Adapt yourself to their particular tempers and capacities. Let the sinner and the saint, the proud Pharisee and the broken-hearted publican, the backslider in heart and the devout believer, the strong and the weak, find that they are not overlooked in your ministrations.

Especially, represent to every one the sin and misery of man's nature, and the deep depravity of his heart, and proclaim that all may hear the riches of the grace of God in Christ Jesus; the love of a dying Saviour; the yearning bowels of his compassion, and his ability "to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

Divide the word of truth, not only publicly, but from house to house. Mr. John Welsh, a devout minister of the last century in Scotland, surprised in his retirements by an intimate friend who found him overwhelmed with grief, replied to his affectionate inquiries, "I have that to press on me which you have not; I have thousands of souls to answer for, and know not how it is with many of them." Seek to know the state of your flock, and seize every favourable opportunity of getting at their hearts. Take pains to remove the obstacles to habitual, serious, and edifying conversation, whether in yourself or in others; and cultivate a habit of conversing with them, as a minister of Jesus, as one whose soul labours for their good. Omit no opportunity of closing your visits with prayer.

Let the poor and the afflicted of your flock bear you witness that you have the mind of Christ, that you are touched with a feeling of their infirmities, and ever ready to carry the instructions and consolations of the word of truth, where they are most needed, and are likely to be most valued.

You will sometimes be called to visit the house of mourning: let it be seen that you can "weep with those who weep." There open the treasures of "the word of truth," and shew how effectually, to him that believeth, they can repair the most distressful breaches, and cheer the horrors of the tomb. Remember how tenderly Jesus wept, and how profitably he taught, at the grave of Lazarus. On all *funeral*

occasions, study to appear the sympathising friend, and the godly minister; giving to the solemn trophies of death a voice, to proclaim Sin the destroyer, and Jesus the Saviour. Your endeavours to sanctify these seasons, likewise, may be greatly assisted by prayer.

The *baptism of children*, too, deserves to be engaged in with great seriousness and devotion. The indiscriminate administration of this ordinance, to me appears a prostitution greatly to be deplored. Parents ought to be well informed of the nature of that covenant of which baptism is a seal; of that faith which they profess, and of those obligations which they solemnly bring themselves under. Previous and very serious conversation to this end, you will find expedient; sometimes it may be found savingly beneficial.

You will, I hope, be also encouraged in your endeavours to *promote family worship*, till there shall be an altar in the dwelling of every professor.

The "rightly dividing the word of truth" will in nothing be attended with more difficulty than in *ministering personal reproof*. You would not act the part of a faithful watchman, were you to suffer sin to remain on your brother; but while faithful friendship marks the sin, let wisdom choose the season, and love appear to dictate the censure you express.

The *children* and *young people* of your congregation must have their portion too of the word of truth. "The Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls"

gathers "the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom." The soil of man's heart naturally produces vice: cultivation is necessary; and the means of cultivation are employed, with the fairest prospects of success, in early life. The practice of *catechising* deserves to be spoken of with the highest recommendation, as belonging to the good old way, wherein multitudes have found grace and heaven. It is worthy of your ambition, in this respect, to be apt to teach, and able to find ready access to the minds of children by affectionate and instructive discourse. It is a talent to be held in no common estimation. Your judicious endeavours, in this way, may awaken the attention of parents to neglected duty, whose exertions would greatly contribute to strengthen your hands. Perhaps some plan of more extended utility may be adopted and encouraged, to instruct the minds of the young, and to direct their morals.

But O my son, my brother in the Gospel! look well to yourself and your household. Take heed that you exhibit in your temper, and in your life, the doctrine you preach and the counsel you give. Let your hearers see in you the blessed influence of true religion, the lovely and beneficial character of the Christian. "Be thou an example of believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

You know who hath promised, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our

abode with him." This promise comprehends all that is desirable. All will be well in prosperity and in adversity, health or sickness, life or death, if God be with you. Oh! be concerned in fervent duty to invite his presence, and secure his blessing. Let others see, in the order of your house, what a Christian family ought to be. Let them see you walk before your house, as one whose great solicitude it is to lead them "to the altar of God, unto God your exceeding joy." Let them see in you the advantage and excellence of the Christian temper in time of family trial. Let them see the pillar of cloud and fire on your tabernacle, and say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Israel! and thy tabernacles, O Jacob!" Let your practice proclaim aloud your resolution, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And if God thus give you the spirit of the covenant, you may, I think, joyfully and thankfully regard it as an earnest of his "pouring his Spirit on your seed, and his blessing on your offspring."

But there are others whom I must recommend to your compassionate notice, in "rightly dividing the word of truth:" I mean, the many in the fields and villages around you, who, from ignorance, or disinclination, or inability, live without the Gospel. Probably they do not know their need of a Saviour: they are "perishing for lack of knowledge." But "the Son of man is come to seek and save that which is lost." Oh, how affectionately and painfully HE sought them in his personal ministry! "And

when he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." Now I hope he is coming, in the agency of his Spirit on the minds of his ministers. Oh, if he put his Spirit upon you, you will think little of labours and condescensions, and reproaches, if you might but be honoured of God as his instrument in the salvation of precious souls.

Now, my son, my brother, a precious talent, a talent of high estimation, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," is committed to your trust. It is committed to you to be kept; not like the miser's wealth, which is secured by locks, and keys, and bars, or hidden in the earth; but like seed, which is best preserved, which indeed can only be long preserved, by being sown. In this view, "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." "Cast thy bread," then, the food of the soul, "on the waters," on the watery furrows, where sense and reason would pronounce it lost, "and thou shalt find it after many days." Scatter it in public ministrations and in private visits, in all places and at all times. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." And may God bless the springing thereof!

There is a further object of laudable ambition contained in our text, to which I hope your views will be especially directed: and that is,

"To be approved of God:" "Study to shew thyself approved unto God." Dr. Doddridge reads it, "Make it thy diligent endeavour to set thyself before God approved." You will not be indifferent about the approbation of men: you will prize the esteem of good men: you will endeavour to "recommend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." But "one is your Master, even Christ." You look to Him for your work, your sufficiency, and your reward.

This admonition comprehends two particulars.

First. Present yourself before God in the services you perform, and consider yourself as acting by his authority and under his eye. Endeavour to realize his greatness, his transcendant glory: it will be an effectual cure for a light and trifling spirit: it will command deep seriousness and circumspection to remember,

> Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
> I am surrounded still with God.

What deep reverence do the angels express, who behold God's awful and unveiled glories! And how reverent should be our temper and carriage under the immediate and continued inspection of the "holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" How should we fear his displeasure; how should we study his will; with what care and diligence should we seek to please Him!

These ideas will, likewise, be the best antidote to the fear of man. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," and too often restrains us from the right and faithful dis-

charge of duty; but "who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" "Be not afraid of their terror, nor be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your heart." The slavish fear of man is a plant that thrives most in those who live afar estranged from God: it cannot exist under the strong beams of his awfully glorious Majesty. I have often contemplated with admiration the fixed, the undaunted resolution of the prophet Michaiah. In an evil day, he is called to deliver the mind of God before an august assembly. Two mighty monarchs, flattered by crowds of apostate priests wait only for his sanction to pursue their favourite project. Unmoved by the representations of the royal messenger, who tampered with him by the way; unimpressed by the grandeur of the assembly, the known hatred which the king of Israel bore him, and his expected resentment; he rises in conscious dignity far, very far, above nobles and kings, and, with a firmness which the world has no power to shake, pronounces the decree of Heaven. And what is it which, under circumstances trying as these truly were, has given him this superiority to the kings of the earth, and raised him so high above the fear of man? It is the vision of the King of kings. He cannot feel the impression of these shadows of greatness, because he is just come from—rather, he is this instant in, the

presence of Infinite Majesty. "I saw the Lord sitting on his Throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing before him on the right hand and on the left!" Oh what can that man fear, what arduous services is he not prepared to undertake, whose soul is filled with the majesty and greatness of his God! "By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Fear God therefore, and Him alone.

Further: Call to mind his encouraging promises, his infinite sufficiency, and his truth: these will inspire you with confidence and courage. You are called to a work,—shall I rather say, you are called to a conflict?—of all others the most arduous. You are called to combat the deeply-rooted prejudices of mankind; to preach a doctrine which carnal reason brands as foolishness; to oppose the strong bias of depraved nature, the stream of popular opinion and custom. You are sent to call men to deny themselves in their prevailing inclinations and habits, to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," to "cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye," and pursue after happiness, in a path directly in opposition to "the course of this world." You are sent to "wrestle not" only "with flesh and blood, but with principalities, with powers, with spiritual wickednesses in high places;" to combat the long-practised wiles of the old serpent, and withstand the influence whereby deluded multitudes are "led captive by him at his will."

The everlasting state of precious souls, under your ministry, will be determined by the regard they pay to the Gospel you preach. Some, I trust, receiving it with faith and love, will be raised to eternal honours; while others, it is to be feared, by their careless or contemptuous neglect of it, will be plunged into dreadful deeps of eternal woe. If you are faithful, you will be "unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:" to the one you will be "the savour of death unto death, to the other of life unto life." We shall not wonder if your soul, awed by the solemnity of these prospects, should cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" You feel the weight of such considerations as these: I doubt not but you are already conversant with difficulties and discouragements. Your difficulties may appear yet more formidable—fruitless labours, blasted hopes, nay, and faithless friends, may burden your soul. Then "cast thy burden on the Lord; he shall sustain thee." In the day of trial remember whom you serve. Remember the gracious words by which he has encouraged your expectations, your most enlarged expectations, from him.—Did he give you your commission? He kindly said, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." —Did he see you discouraged by a consciousness of your own frailty? He sweetly said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—Did he see you starting back from an enterprise so arduous, a conflict to which you saw

yourself entirely unequal? You can remember too, I trust, how he was pleased to give you a glimpse of his glory, of his all-sufficiency, and graciously said, "Go in this my might!"

Did he see you realizing untried paths of difficulty, and counting upon scenes of increased disquietude? Remember, too, how he rebuked your distrustful fears, saying, "No man goeth to warfare at his own charges." "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy day so shall thy strength be." "I will hold thy right hand, and say, Fear not, for I will help thee!"

O never forget his promise! Never lose sight of the Promiser! In every arduous service, in every fresh difficulty and danger, remember whose cause you are engaged in, and where is your treasured sufficiency.

Again: Represent to your admiring soul, his goodness—his immeasurable grace and love. It will inspire you with zeal; it will prepare your heart for arduous and painful services. There may come a time, when the fervour of your love shall be relaxed, your heart grow cold. Motives may be wanting to rouse your languid spirit. Then, remember the love of Christ; the condescensions, the labours, the reproaches, the agonies, the cursed death he willingly submitted to for your sake. Remember the misery, the wrath, the hell from which he ransomed you—the grace, the covenant, the heaven of joy and glory he provided for you; and remember

the free, the discriminating, the wonderful displays of this love when he called you by his grace and put you amongst his children. Oh, here is enough, for ever to make his Name to be as ointment poured forth, enough for ever to make his yoke easy and his burden light. May you and I, my son, feel, as Paul felt, the influence of this motive; when his soul, borne along as in a mighty stream, amidst labours and sufferings and dangers, incomparably beyond what we are called to sustain, exclaimed, "The love of Christ constraineth me!" O! present yourself before the great God and your Saviour; and then if you complain, if you grieve, it will be that your services fall infinitely short of your obligations. Should temptation at any time prevail, and your backsliding heart be drinking in the old serpent's poison, and "going after its covetousness;" if Jesus "turn and affectionately look upon you," that look will penetrate your very soul, and you will go out and weep bitterly. If the dying love of Jesus be represented in its proper energy to your mind, and shed abroad in your heart, you will feel as the prophet felt when the live coal, taken from off the altar, touched his lips—your iniquity will be purged away—your earthly, cold, and languid spirit—your evil heart of unbelief—will yield to the constraining, all-conquering power of a Saviour's love: and then, whatever service is to be performed, your willing soul, prostrate at his feet, will cry, "Here am I; send me."

Secondly, Make it your diligent endeavour to "set yourself before God approved."

1. Let him see that your heart's desire is, to glorify his Name in all you do. This is what God expects, and what he deserves of all his creatures: for "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." This temper he beholds in the superior order of his messengers and ministers: "he makes his angels, spirits; and his ministers a flame of fire;" burning with zeal for the honour of their Lord. And I hope something like this is, in some instances, found in the church on earth. O that you, my son, may be found "with singleness of heart serving the Lord!" Bear this sentiment with you; "God will estimate your services, not by the degree of your labour or your suffering, but by the inward temper of your soul." "I, the Lord, search the heart, that I may render to every man according to the things done in the body, whether they have been good or evil." The materials you bring to raise the temple of the Lord must be tried as by fire: and, perhaps, in your most serious moments, you will tremble to think how much of those performances which fellow-creatures had received, even with applause, and which your own heart had received with complacency, will be burnt up as "wood, hay, and stubble." Oh, search your own heart, try your own thoughts: you will see more and more reason to exercise a godly jealousy over yourself. Your ripening years will exhibit that humbling truth in a

stronger, much stronger, light. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and instead of complaining that more of your labours were not honoured of God, you may be ashamed of all of them, and wonder that any of them should have been noticed with approbation. Remember, you are not called to exhibit yourself; to call the admiring eye to your character, your gifts, your zeal: but you are to exhibit your Master; you are to tell of Jesus' love, to proclaim his glory and his grace, and cry to all around you, "Behold the Lamb of God!" O labour to say with a true heart, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." If you have gifts, and your light shine before men, learn with Moses to put on the veil; "Be clothed with humility." If your Lord be enthroned, you will find a sure path to honour.

2. Let him see you humbly bowing before him, to receive your commission, and to be appointed to your particular work. It will be a ground of inexpressible satisfaction to know, that your commission to preach the Gospel is ratified by the great seal of Heaven; and that you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take on you the work of the ministry; for whom God sends, he will furnish; he will sustain; he will succeed; he will reward. If

you be sent of God, you will speak as one who hath authority. Oh be solicitous to be approved in his sight!

But beside your general commission, be continually and earnestly looking to Him for a particular message to the souls of your people collectively and individually. Those subjects of public discourse you will find the best chosen which you have received in your most spiritual converse with your people, and in your devoutest approaches to the Divine Oracle. And, as to the event and issue of your commission, do not think of invading the prerogative of God, and prescribing and controuling the measures of his proceeding: rather, in low prostration of soul, lie at his feet; and though your commission, as that of Isaiah, be a very painful one, learn to say, "Father, glorify thy Name." Be willing to do God's work, and leave the issue with him.

Others may appear to labour in a more kindly soil, and under the more bountiful influences of Heaven; but remember, it is an honour to be, in any service, employed by such a Master. "His work is honourable and glorious;" nor will "his promise fail for evermore." Remember, Jesus said, "I am not come to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me."

3. Let him see that you are devoutly looking to him, and to him alone, for your sufficiency and for your recompence. Take heed of leaning on

your own understanding, or of trusting your own heart, or of entertaining a thought of your own sufficiency. You are now venturing on the waters; and though it were a stormy and tempestuous day, you might venture in the faith of Him under whose feet the proud waters became a sea of chrystal. But take heed how you lose sight of Jesus: "without" him "you can do nothing." Remember, how even Peter's confidence failed him: "when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and, beginning to sink," he cried, "Lord save me." But you need him not in a stormy day only, but every day, and in every duty Alas! how cold and languid are those devotions which are not enlivened by his Spirit; and how feeble and unimpressive those sermons which are the unsanctified efforts of the preacher's ingenuity. Be not ashamed to acknowledge what it was Paul's glory to say, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."

Look upward! Contemplate with delight, the fulness that is in Christ. Let your soul, in fervent devotion, drink in the beams of light and grace from that heavenly Sun. In every duty, go forth in the strength of the Lord God; and then you may press forward and say, Courage, my soul! "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Look also for your recompence, as well as your support, not from man, but from your Master

in heaven: "Cease from man," is a lesson you will still have to learn. It was one of the last lessons we find Paul learning on this side heaven. A hard lesson, but an acquisition highly beneficial. Think what his affectionate, generous, soul must have felt, when, in the trying moment of his appearance at Cæsar's tribunal, "all men forsook" him; his dear brethren in Christ; men who owed their own souls unto him. Yet this was kindly permitted, to give him a brighter display of the power and grace of Christ: "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." O my son, my brother, there is in Jesus a source of strength and consolation that can never fail. Live near to him; live by faith upon him; expect all from him. You may, with smiling indifference, see the fairest stars lost in the beams of that glorious Sun.

4. Let your Master see you practically consecrated to his service; your head, your heart, your hands, truly devoted to his glory; glad to improve every opportunity of doing or of getting good; and replying to every temptation to carnal ease and sensual indulgence, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me!"

5. Let him see that, with a humble and a grateful spirit, you give him the glory of whatsoever good is done in you, or by you. Should "the weapons of your warfare" be found "mighty," and victory

crown your conflict, chide the mistaken ardour of the captive who would fall at your feet, and say, "See thou do it not..... Worship God:" and let Him see your admiring souls together prostrate in the field, crying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name be all the praise."

Diligently cultivate a frame and temper of soul, such as God approves; and every day, and in every changing circumstance, reflect, What doth the Lord my God require of me? Study his will, and endeavour to know the duty of every relation, and every situation, in which his providence shall place you, that you may be approved in his sight. Love all men; let your soul be all benevolence; and your self-denying labours demonstrate to the people of your charge, how truly you are their "servant, for Jesus' sake." Convince every man you are not his enemy, though you tell him the truth; that you love his soul, though you cannot flatter his prejudices and his follies; nay, though you severely reprove his sins.

This, my son, my brother, is the way to be blessed, and to be made a blessing; to live usefully, and to die comfortably: this is the path to true honour, that which is substantial and lasting, the honour which cometh from God; for his determination is fixed: "Him that honoureth me, I will honour; and him that despiseth me, shall be lightly esteemed." Thus serving God with your spirit, you may appeal to

him under all censures; you may expect support from him under whatever opposition you may meet with. In every storm, you may "possess your soul in patience;" for "the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." Never think of avoiding trouble, by flying from God and from duty. Jonah's experience may lead you to expect that God will hurl forth a storm to arrest the fugitive.

In the smile of Heaven, you may often find a sweet calm on earth. God will bless your bread and your water; your comforts, and your crosses; your family, and your flock: nay, and many times, "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his very enemies to be at peace with him."

Improve your talent, and more talents will be given. "God giveth more grace." He will give you more of himself, more of his Spirit, more of the image of his holiness; and that will be incomparably better than the applause of fellow-worms, or the treasures of the universe. He may cause your prospects to widen, your sphere of labour and of usefulness to be enlarged; and make you "a burning and shining light," to direct many a wanderer into the path of life, and cheer many a pilgrim in his passage to heaven. And all this he will crown with a flood of glory and joy, poured on your transported soul, when, amidst the awful solemnities of the great judg-

ment-day, he shall, with infinite complacency, smile and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"—O my brother in the Gospel, make it your diligent endeavour to "present yourself before God approved."

Suffer me to close with a few hints of general admonition.

1. Cultivate a veneration for the Scriptures, and take pains to become familiar with them. Revere your Bible as the Book of God; the light that will infallibly guide you; the bread that will strengthen you; the treasure that will enrich you. Read the Scriptures in their original language, with the eye of a critical inquirer;—but especially read them with the heart of a Christian, a believer; whose faith, whose hope, whose joy, whose very life, must be maintained by them. Daily and hourly study the Scriptures: and be assured of this, your esteem of them will increase with your knowledge and experience. You may read the best of human compositions, till they become almost insipid; you tire, you want a change; but in the eternal word of the eternal God, there is a mine of instruction and consolation that is found more and more enriching and satisfying, as you dig deeper and deeper into it.

2. Next to the Scriptures, esteem the writings of those ministers whom God has been pleased to distinguish with the richest measure of his Spirit. As

Protestant Dissenters, we have reason to venerate the names of Owen, Howe, Goodwin, Charnock, Flavel, Baxter, and many others. God gave them a deep understanding in the Scriptures, made them shining ornaments in his church, and honoured them with great usefulness: they "being dead, yet speak." Emulate their holy zeal; and while you regard the Scriptures as the only standard of truth, it will afford you satisfaction to find your views of the Gospel sanctioned by the testimony of these great men of God.

3. Aspire after a close walk with God, and take great pains to maintain the divine life in your soul. Hence will be your best preparation *for* your work, and your pleasure *in* your work. Hereby you will find your soul refreshed from day to day. The ardour of your affection will be renewed, your faith in God confirmed; you will go forth amidst duties, and difficulties, and dangers, "in the strength of the Lord God," saying, "None of these things move me." When, coming forth from holy converse with God, you look upon precious souls, "lying in wickedness," you will feel in a measure as David felt, when he saw his lamb in the paws of the lion and the bear. You will spare no pains; you will be deterred by no danger; you will be prepared to make every sacrifice, if you might but rescue and feed the lambs of Christ's flock.

4. Remember Jesus Christ, and set him always before you. Think how He would have acted in the si-

tuation and circumstances in which you are placed. Oh what condescension and self-denial; what compassion and love; what zeal and devotedness to God; what spirituality of temper and holy indifference about the present life; what meekness under unjust censure, and grievous suffering; what love to enemies; what a careful redemption of time, and improvement of every opportunity of shewing himself the friend of mankind, appear in his character, in his life, and in his death! Oh! be solicitous to have, not barely the *name*, but the *heart*, of a follower of Jesus.

Finally. Be solicitous daily and deeply to feel the worth of precious souls committed to your charge; and labour to be found faithful: "We watch for souls, as those who must give account." O my son, my brother in the Christian ministry, the thought of this all-important trust, and of that bar of God before which we must appear, is enough to rouse our powers to action, and make us "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." "All souls are mine, saith the Lord," and they are precious in his sight. Do not let us estimate their value by the circumstances of depravity, deformity, and pollution, into which sin has brought them; and the outward forms of meanness, poverty, and wretchedness, in which they often appear; but let us look back to Calvary, and think at what a price Jesus ransomed them. Let us look forward to heaven and glory, and think what those ransomed

souls *shall* be! How like stars they shall shine and burn in the crown of their Redeemer for ever! O my brother in the Gospel, if your exertions should be honoured of God, as the means of rescuing one precious soul from nature's ruins, and raising it to that seat of honour and of bliss, would not you forget your labour, and your conflict too, in the joy of that vision?

But if you "forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;" if you say, "Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, shall not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his work?"—My heart's desire and prayer is, that you may obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful!

A

CHARGE,

DELIVERED

AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. JAMES KNIGHT,

AT KINGSTON, SURREY,

NOV. 8, 1808.

I HAVE no other apology, Sir, to offer for my appearing a second time in this place, on a similar occasion, and in the same solemn department of the service, but that your particular request has placed me here.—Here I stand, to speak to you of things great and interesting beyond comparison. This I would do "in the name of the Lord Jesus," in the presence of his Majesty, and relying on the aid of his gracious influence.

You, my brother, have given up yourself to the work of the ministry. I trust, the Lord Jesus has himself appointed you to this service, and already given you your *charge*. Your fathers and brethren have applied "the outward and visible sign." It belongs to Him to impart "the inward grace." If you have ordination from "the Chief Shepherd,"

you have the "unction from the Holy One." Then you will feel, in measure at least, as the Apostle of the Gentiles felt, when he addressed his friends at Rome, in that delightful assurance on which I shall ground the hints I have to suggest, and which is recorded, Rom. xv. 29. "And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

There, Sir, there is your model. Strive to possess, as Paul did, a distinguished measure of the Spirit of Christ. Be ambitious to have your soul enlightened, enflamed, and filled with it, as his was. Ah, what an insignificant, useless statue is that man, who has the place and the homage of a minister, but not a minister's heart! He has gifts, he possesses ability to gratify the taste of carnal minds, to gain a name among men: but the heaven-taught, labouring soul, the glowing affection and zeal, the qualifications to "win souls" to Christ, are wanting. "I sent them not, saith the Lord, yet they ran." Never, Sir, may your credentials be wanting. May you ever preach, and pray, and converse, as in the presence of your Master! May you have a testimony in the consciences of your hearers, when you say with Paul; "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after men; for I neither received it of men, nor was I," in the least sense, "taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul knew this, and he knew how his thoughts and affections were sanctified, and his

whole soul cast as into a mould, and framed and fashioned after that revelation from Heaven. Therefore, we cannot wonder that he should say, "I am sure that when I come unto you—"

Precious treasure! "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." Blessed minister! whose earthen vessel is filled with such a treasure. Happy people! who enjoy the benefit of so burning and shining a light. No wonder that they should be "willing for a season to rejoice in his light." Glorious Saviour! who is the source of all this excellency; who maintains, in these lower spheres, a succession of such stars.

Come then, my brother, though I stand not here as a dictator, nor an instructor; yet suffer me to "stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance."

I have chosen this Scripture, because it contains a delightful statement of the *subject-matter* of your ministry, the *message* with which you are charged; and because it represents that superior and most excellent *qualification* of a minister after which, I trust, your very soul aspires.

I. Let me speak to you of the message with which you are charged; the revelation of the grace of God, to which it will be your business, and I hope your delight, to direct the believing regards of your hearers. Indeed, it were in vain for me to attempt a full representation of even Paul's view of it. Yet Paul only "knew in part, and prophecied in part." Nay, and blessed angels are but students here, still

"looking," (even after 1800 years spent in studious search, still looking) "into these things." Thus will you, Sir, I trust, stand on the shore, and gaze, and admire, sometimes delightfully absorbed in the contemplation of that boundless ocean; and thus, according to the grace given you, you will proclaim to others, "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ;"—"the *Gospel* of Christ;" "the *blessing* of the Gospel of Christ;" "the *fulness* of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

1. "The *Gospel* of Christ." The sum of your message is CHRIST; Christ as "all and in all." You have to represent his *personal glory;* to proclaim him "the mighty God."—You have to shew forth his *mediatorial honours;* to declare, that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."—You have to preach "the Gospel of Christ;" to bear to your fellow-men "good tidings of great joy:" good tidings of Christ; what love he has manifested, what a price he has paid for a sinner's ransom, what a covenant he has sealed, what wonders of grace he has wrought, and what a heaven he has opened: to tell them, that God has laid up in Christ whatever is requisite to the salvation of sinners; and that all is to be had of him, "without money and without price:" to assure the vilest of them, that you have it in charge to "*pray*" them "in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." No wonder if, when the Holy Spirit "takes of the things of Christ, and shews them unto you," you should appear in the pulpit wrapt in amazement,

and plead with your hearers as one who cannot readily take a denial.

Courage, my brother! you have—

2. To declare "the *blessing* of the Gospel of Christ." It is a word of sweet import. It assures us, that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Delightful hope! "The Gospel preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

Blessing is a word that likewise denotes fatherly grace and goodness. Blessing is a fatherly act. Christ, "the everlasting Father," left his family on earth in the very act of blessing them. And when ascended, he gave the command, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness!" Soon were the effects delightfully manifest. Nor has the blessing been ever withheld.

"The blessing of the Gospel of Christ." It is no little honour, Sir, to be charged with such a message. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Yet what is the Gospel, however published, without the blessing! But should the prayers we have now been offering, through the sacrifice and intercession of our great High Priest, be accepted of the Father, and should he richly

pour his Spirit on you, my brother, and his blessing on the dear people of your charge; what a thankful remembrance will many long retain of the union this day recognised! There is a delightful word yet remaining.

3. It is "the *fulness* of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." It is complete; there is nothing wanting, in no respect wanting.

1st. In respect of his *provisions*, there is no deficiency. "How great is his goodness!"

> Dear God! The treasures of thy love
> Are everlasting mines;
> Deep as our helpless miseries are,
> And boundless as our sins.

What a fulness of pardoning mercy, of sanctifying grace, and everlasting consolation! It is the fulness of a *feast*; "a feast unto all people," a royal banquet. The best things are found there; the best things in variety, the best things in abundance.—It is the fulness of a *vessel*, that can receive no more. It is the fulness of a *fountain*, that loses nothing by communicating. It is the fulness of the *ocean*; the fulness of the *sun*; the "fulness of Him" who is "ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." It is the mediatorial grace and glory of Him in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

You will have, Sir, to set before your hearers all that "grace and truth" that was prefigured in

Jewish types; all that the Prophets foretold, and that great and precious promises contained. You will have to appear before them with a most free and affectionate offer of whatever mercy and grace their utmost necessities require, and whatever the capacities of their immortal souls can possibly receive and enjoy.

2dly, In its dispensation, it admits of no exception. Precious Gospel! It is "good tidings of great joy unto all people." Herein, the Saviour Jesus stretches his gracious arms abroad, to gather and embrace "all nations, and languages, and tongues, and people;" "circumcision, and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free;" sinners of every age, of every station, of every degree in iniquity, transgression, and sin. No one is left to sigh and say, "It is a *fountain* of grace indeed, but not open unto me, or ineffectual to wash my deep and deadly stains away: it is a rich *feast*, but not for me; it is a delightful *inheritance*, but out of my reach; it is a glorious *crown*, but it were presumption in me to think of becoming a candidate for it." The Gospel resisteth every plea of an "evil heart of unbelief;" it leaves no willing soul any one just reason of despondency. No one can justly despair on the ground of unworthiness; or because merit or qualification is wanting. It is a free overture, "without money, and without price;" and that to sinners of mankind, without one exception.—That which completes

"the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ" is—

3dly, It is "the ministration of the Spirit;" it is "the Gospel preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven." This is the rod, Sir, you are to stretch out; and this is your encouragement. It is a wonder-working rod: God has accomplished, God does accomplish, his mightiest work by it. This will encourage you to "prophecy to dry bones;" because He who raiseth the dead, saith "unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." This, Sir, is the glorious Gospel you have to preach. Now, I wish—

II. To set before you the *minister* who, with his commission, has received from his Divine Master this most excellent qualification. Fain would I shew you the very heart of the Apostle, as it breathes in this expression. Happy will you be, my brother, should it be given you to feel as he felt, when he said, "I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ!" This would render your ministerial character illustrious, and make your work delightful and useful.

1. Then will your own mind be richly stored with evangelical knowledge. Your views of the Gospel will be just and distinguishing; your judgment clear and penetrating. You will have an abasing discovery of the sin and misery of man's awful, helpless state as a fallen creature. You will delightfully know "and

believe the love which God hath to us." You will joyfully and largely survey "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." You will be instructed in the manner of the Holy Spirit's working on the souls of men; and, in particular cases, be able to detect the wiles of Satan, and the devices of an "evil heart of unbelief." You will find an enriching treasure in the word of God. You will look beyond the letter; the veil will often be removed; and you will see, and taste, and feast upon "the hidden manna." You will find that no labour is lost in "searching the Scriptures;" that the treasure that enricheth most, lies the deepest; that the oil that shines the brightest, is well beaten. Again—

2. "The blessing of the Gospel of Christ" will possess your soul, and you will be filled with it. It will fix your mind; it will occupy your thoughts, your time, your solitary meditation and social converse. It will deaden your affections to the world; it will direct your pursuits, and command your whole soul. You will condescend to business, and converse about meaner things from necessity. Here all your heart will be engaged: it will want vent; it will seek relief; it will delight in communicating. Often your prayer will be, "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise." Many a persecuted minister has found that the bitterest ingredient in his bitter cup was a forced silence, cruelly imposed upon him, while "the blessing of the Gospel" within was a fire suppressed.

Soberly reflect, my dear sir, what should that man be, who is "cast in the mould of the Gospel," who is possessed of "the fulness of that blessing." What should the frame of his spirit be! What should his habitual temper, his speech, his conversation be! What, but necessity, should limit the extent of his ministerial labours!

My brother, if the Lord Jesus has indeed "counted" you "faithful, putting you into the ministry," he will expect much from you. He calls you a *star*. Let the people of your charge find that you have fellowlowship with "the Sun of righteousness," that you are filled out of his fulness, and that, in "burning and shining," you reflect his glory.—He calls you a *labourer*. Let them see, that your very soul "labours, striving according to the working of Him who worketh in you mightily;" labours "to save yourself and those that hear you."—He calls you a *watchman*. Let them bear you witness, that you "watch for souls as knowing that you must give account." He calls you a *shepherd*. Then let Him see that you love him by the care you take to feed his sheep, to feed his lambs, to "strengthen the diseased, to heal the sick, to bind up the broken, to bring again that which was driven away, and to seek that which was lost."—He makes you an *ambassador*. Let him see, that with tender and earnest solicitude, "as though God did beseech" his creatures in rebellion by you, you "pray them, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God!"—He appoints you a *steward*.

Then let every one receive his portion in season. "The manifold grace of God" is committed to you. It is a treasure, and it is a trust indeed! "Study to approve yourself unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

How many an opportunity of usefulness might be seized; how much more good might be effected, were ministers found among the people of their charge "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ!" If this treasure, my brother, enrich and sanctify your soul, you will very carefully redeem precious time; you will not easily yield to the specious pleas of flesh and blood. You will not want motives when opportunities of service appear. You will be alive when duty calls, and go to your work, "with all your heart, and all your soul."—Another happy effect will follow.

3. The Gospel will be the chosen, the beloved subject of your ministry. It will of course be so, as it is the sweetest rest, the richest banquet to your own soul: and "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." So let it speak, in a full and faithful ministry "of the Gospel of Christ." This would be to imitate the great Apostle, who "determined not to know any thing" among the Corinthians, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This would be to approve yourself to your Great Master, and secure the presence of his Spirit with you. Nothing, without this, could be ex-

pected to secure the important end of preaching; in "winning souls to Christ."

Let others preach, if they please, as if they scarcely aspired higher than to discourse on natural religion; or, affecting to be deemed sound in the faith, let them be satisfied with giving their essays an evangelical tinge, while excellency of speech and the beauties of a sprightly imagination are substituted in the place of that "meat indeed, and drink indeed," the doctrine of "Christ crucified." You, Sir, "have not so learned Christ, if so be you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." Then, you will dare to be faithful; you will be "valiant for the truth;" you will boldly attack the strong holds of the enemy; you will strike at the root of evil—man's awful apostacy, his vile nature, the state of sin and misery into which he is fallen, together with the wrath and curse that hang over him: and all this to "prepare the way of the Lord;" glad to introduce your beloved, adored Master, who has prepared, and prepared with his own most precious blood, the only balm in the world that can heal and bind up broken, dying hearts; the only covering that can hide from the wrathful eye of inexorable Justice, the guilt of ten thousand thousand transgressions; the only laver that can wash the foulest, deepest stains away. While too many are studious to gratify the corrupt and carnal taste of their hearers, and fix the admiring eye on themselves; your lips, "touched

with a coal from the altar," your heart overflowing with "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," will cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" And such liberty and delight will you feel in speaking of the Godhead and the grace of Christ; his mediatorial character and glory; his love on the cross, and his love on the throne; that it will appear, that these are the things that possess your soul; and that, in comparison with these, nothing else can give you pleasure.

Do I hear you ask, "Are we to preach nothing else?"

I answer—Be it your care, Sir, to understand your commission well, and to "give full proof of your ministry." Never leave the pulpit, under a censure from any disappointed grieved hearer, for having withheld "the bread of life" from the Lord's table, or for having preached as if you had even forgot the errand on which you were sent. Alas, for the places of our sanctuary, when the altar and the laver remain neglected! Awfully, then, "the glory is departed!" But while "Christ crucified" is the subject-matter of the Christian ministry; while "Christ is all and in all," there will be found an abundant store of diversified provision—no want of sufficiency or of variety. While "the beauty of the Lord" is seen in his earthly courts, and "the Lamb is the light thereof," the poor in spirit will be, not disappointed, but feasted. You, my brother, will bring forth from your treasure "things

"new and old," "milk for babes," cordials for the faint and languishing, and "strong meat" for strong men. None will be disappointed, but those who are full before they come; none but those who are "sensual, not having the Spirit," will complain, "Our soul loatheth this light bread!" "the table of the Lord is contemptible!" But some may ask—

Must not the *Law* be preached?

Yes, it may; it *must*. It must be preached; for it is, in the Book of Inspiration, "the eternal law." The Spirit of God still continues to renew the characters of it in the heart of man: it is still needed "as a schoolmaster to bring" thoughtless men "to Christ." You will see Jesus going before you preaching and explaining the law: you will see the path of its precepts marked with his bloody footsteps: for he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Preach the law, Sir, not as a rule of justification:—this was the fatal error of the Pharisees. They overlooked "the law of faith," "the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ," and most graciously and explicitly given to Abraham; and substituting "the law of works" in its stead, vainly, and ignorantly, and impiously "went about to establish their own righteousness." —But preach the law, thereby to "shew to man his transgression," and, to such as have found mercy, the course in which their grateful affections should flow.

But, especially, *preach the Gospel;* "preach the

unsearchable riches of Christ." Proclaim the infinite glory of his person, and the perfection of his mediatorial righteousness; the fulness and the freeness of his grace.

Never be afraid of preaching the Gospel indefinitely, and without exception, unto *all who hear you.* If you come to your charge, my brother, "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," you will be warranted to announce, in the language of a special messenger from heaven, "Behold, I bring *you* good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto *all people.*" You have it in charge to say, "All things are ready, come to the feast." There is no fear of exceeding your commission, when you say to such as are "spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not," "Ho! *every one* that thirsteth, come to the waters—:" or, when you lift up your voice like a trumpet, and invite crouds of sinners to Christ, as himself did, when "he stood and cried, If *any man* thirst, let him come to me and drink."

Some ministers will venture to represent Christ as an *object* before sinners, blind and deaf, and "dead in trespasses and sins," but they dare not presume to preach the Gospel unto them: as if admitting a possibility that, by a miracle of power, a dead corpse may be made to see an object; yet, regarding it as an absurdity to expect that it should ever be made to hear a voice. Hesitate not, Sir, in the

name of Jesus, to preach to the deaf and the dead; nor suffer a doubt, but that "the day cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man and live."

You will, I trust, Sir, ever carefully maintain the necessity of more than an *objective* view of Christ: the necessity of having Christ formed in the heart, as well as presented to the understanding: the necessity of that special operation of the Holy Spirit whereby he "sanctifies us wholly in body, soul, and spirit."

You will, likewise, avoid a *general and undistinguishing manner of address*,—carefully distinguishing between the reformed character, and the "new creature:" between mere morality, however refined, and true religion. Never be afraid to say, "Ye must be born again;" "except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Let your addresses be pointed to the several characters of your hearers: and let "every one receive his own portion."

Would you see the precious seed of the word spring and flourish? Follow your public discourses to the families of your people: improve opportunities of personal and appropriate conversation. This is to cover and clothe the seed with earth. "Pray evermore," and entreat the prayers of your people: this is to bring down, "the former and latter

rain." Will you bear with me, Sir, while I finally remark:

4. If you come to the people of your charge "in the fulness of the *blessing* of the Gospel of Christ," you will regard them with *fatherly affection*, and seek their salvation with *fatherly solicitude*. You will have to proclaim to your hearers; "God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to *bless* you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Ah, the tender affection, the fatherly compassion, with which the Lord Jesus regards the infirmities and sorrows, the temptations and conflicts of his people; nay, and the wanderings of strangers, the oppressions of enemies, and the tears of penitents! Not a groan, not a sigh from a solitary prisoner, from a prodigal returning, escapes his notice; nor is forgotten of him amidst "the care of all the churches," or the government of all the world. Paul had a fatherly spirit too: he had drunk deep into the spirit of his Master:—"We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." And if you, Sir, come to your people "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," you will condescend to their several infirmities and griefs; you will feel for them as a father for his children; you

will "long for souls," and hail returning prodigals, "in the bowels of Jesus Christ." Your flock will need the Shepherd's tender care. "Lovest thou me?" said the Saviour, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs."

> "Is there a lamb in all His flock
> You would disdain to feed?"

"No, Lord, none! not one. Thou hast possessed, and filled, and inflamed my heart with 'the fulness of the blessing of thy Gospel,' and it makes me long to convey a blessing to all of them."

With fatherly affection, then, behold *children in years:* your Master's eye with gracious affection was upon them. He has commanded the blessing. Seek them; seek to gather them with your arm, and carry them in your bosom, and bring them to Jesus: say from your heart, with the prophet Micah, "My soul desired the first ripe fruits!" And while you thus pray and look up, fear not. God will, in some "times of refreshing" pour out his Spirit, and his blessing upon them; and "one shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his own hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

Remember, likewise, *children in knowledge and experience;* to "feed them with food convenient for them;" to mingle your fatherly affection with their infirmities and fears, their feeble endeavours and trembling hopes.

Seek the *thoughtless wanderer* too: and let your very soul go forth to meet the prodigal in his return; listen to his moan with fatherly affection; and stay the utterings of his broken heart with fatherly consolations. Remember, too, "the Son of man is come to *seek* and to save that which is lost." Let the Shepherd's voice be heard in the wilderness; in the unenlightened villages; and let the compassions of his heart appear in the labours of his life, in seeking after that which is gone astray, and *ready to perish.*

Time, my brother, will never hang heavy on you, if your heart be filled with this treasure. Engagements of real importance will be ever pressing on you. Your Master will find work enough for your hands, your head, your heart; and your work will be your delight. You will ever have an antidote to the poison of the tale-bearer's tongue: you will have no time for those impertinences which are every where in circulation among the weak, the indolent, and the injurious; and which cannot be meddled with, but to your hurt. You will chide the censorious; you will hate, you will shun, your soul will loath the strife and disputation. And, hereby, you will discourage, and guard against evils of the most injurious tendency; evils by which, in many religious societies, the enemy of souls has prevailed effectually to interrupt the intercourse of Christian affection; has caused prayers to be hindered; the cloud of blessing from above to be withheld; and sent the dove-like Spirit of Christ grieved away.

Be "zealous for the Lord of hosts," my brother. It will be, effectually, to shut the door against many evils: it will be, to secure a rich blessing on your own soul, and on your ministry. And, that it may be so, *read your Bible much*, and read it with prayer. "Search the Scriptures;" study the mind of the Spirit in the word; contemplate the mystery of redeeming love; *live near to God in Christ. There* is the fountain whence all your sufficiency, your light, your life, your renewed strength, and courage, and comfort, must be derived. It is good to be with him, much with him. You cannot, "with open face," behold his glory, without being "transformed into his image."

You will, likewise, find it good to be familiar with those who have most of his Spirit. Love their company: be conversant with the writings of those among them who have therein dropped their mantle, and are ascended to glory.

Labour after *humbleness of mind.* Your Master loves and honours such servants: they lean upon his bosom.

And again I say, *pray evermore:* "pray without ceasing."

Some of us your fellow-labourers feel that the sun of our life and labour is fast inclining to the west: yet we have joy in seeing many, many succeeding lights rising with promising splendour in the east. May they all in their respective spheres, shine with superior lustre when we are no more! How would it cheer the mo-

ments of our departure, if, before we drop, we should see a glory in the course in which you, my brother, are moving; if the report should reach us concerning *Kingston*, "There lives, there labours, there walks in holy, heavenly conversation, to the admiration of saint and sinner, a man 'full of the Holy Ghost and of faith;' there the heavens are dropping down fatness, the fields are ripe unto the harvest, and much people are added unto the Lord: forgetting himself, abasing himself, spending himself, he loses every care in the one object of his solicitude, to 'win souls' to Christ."

Happy, happy people! Happy town, and happy neighbourhood! Happy servant of the best of *Masters*! "His name shall be in everlasting remembrance." Returning to his Master, he will fall at his feet, and report, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded!" While his Lord, "rejoicing over him with singing," will pronounce, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Amen.

LETTERS.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

TO MRS. T—— D——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT seems your mind has been perplexed. You have not known how to reconcile your mind to some representations of God which you find in his word. Indeed, we are too nearly allied to sense, to form a just and full idea of his excellent Majesty. The mind of man, in this imperfect state, is apt to mutilate the character of God, and efface or obscure some letters of his Name. Our creature-apprehensions often mislead us: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." We fix our eyes on the Divine benignity and mercy, and fondly imagine, that, in the constellation of the Divine attributes, this star must shine with transcendant radiancy. Doubtless, its glory will surpass our largest expectations; it is infinite: yet let not the glory of other Divine excellences offend us. It will not, when we are freed from sense as well as sin. Then shall we know what that beatitude means, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

When God reveals himself, it is in his
racter; in his holiness; in the assemblage
perfections; and in their united glory.
exhibition we behold in Christ crucified.
lovely characters of "mercy and truth,"
teousness and peace," are displayed in sweet
If either character be prominent, it is his
ness. The great end of the work of redem
of the solemn review of all his procedure a
tribunal, is "to declare his righteousness.
and angels in heaven are contemplating th
tion in a much stronger light than we; and
lightful complacency, they sing, "Holy, h
Lord God Almighty;" "just and tru
ways, holy and righteous are thy works.
let us be willing that God should be wh
that he should write his own Name, an
himself: nor wonder that the original s
very different from the figure which our im
had drawn. Never let us arraign the cond
Most High, or think it strange, that, in his
nations and procedure, there should be
which we cannot explain. For "who by
can find out God?" "His works are gr
great for a finite mind to grasp, yet "so
of all them that have pleasure therein."
joy to think, that "when he shall appear,
unvailed glory of his character, "we sha
full and everlasting delight, "see him,"
ferent, perhaps, from our present concept
we shall see him) "*as he is.*"

You ask, *did Christ die for all men?* I take it for granted, my dear friend, that you are prepared to submit this inquiry to the decision of the Spirit of God in the Word. Our apprehensions and feelings may deceive us; that cannot. There is not a doubt, whether the infinitely precious blood of Christ be *sufficient* for the redemption of the world: nor does it admit of a doubt whether any sinner who comes to Christ by faith shall effectually partake of redemption and salvation. These are glorious facts. Sometimes the boast of liberality has been attached to the belief of universal redemption: but vain the boast, till it can be demonstrated, that such a view of the Gospel furnishes any real advantage. We believe, with our brethren, that the death of Christ will be effectual for the salvation of *all* who believe: and they admit, as well as we, that no man, continuing in unbelief, has an interest in any one saving good: but the inquiry relates to the *intended* scope and efficacy of the death of Christ. Far be it from me to go about to "limit the Holy One of Israel," in the regards of his mercy: yet while we trace its discovery, let us carry the lamp of truth with us; let us hear what God shall speak.

It is of importance in this inquiry, to ascertain the *purpose and grace of the eternal Father;* the determination of his holy will. We find it declared (and they are words of charming sound), "God *so* loved *the world*, that" (when fallen angels were left to perish) "he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. This representation plainly teaches the discrimination of Divine Love, and its final intention. It designed the everlasting life of all believers. And if it be a truth beyond all controversy, that, "faith is not of ourselves," but that "it is the gift of God," then the extent of the death of Christ, in its final efficacy, must exactly correspond with the original design: for he "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Other expressions reveal the sovereignty of the Father's purpose: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to *as many as thou hast given him.*" John xvii. ii. Not all the world, but a remnant given "out of the world." And they are such as the Father had first a special interest in: "thine they were, and thou gavest them me." "This is the will of him that sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." John vi. 39. Had God willed the redemption of all men, he would have given all men to Christ. But these testimonies constrain me to believe that none were given to Christ, but such as are eventually and everlastingly saved.

The intention of Christ in dying, it seems, was in perfect harmony with that of his heavenly Father. And this is a consideration that contributes greatly to the manifestation of the truth in this reference. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am

glorified in them." My friend has not been so inattentive an inquirer after truth, as not to have noticed the many characters of discrimination applied to those for whom Christ died. These all bear an irresistible testimony in favour of an election of grace. Thus it was promised the Redeemer, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." (Isa. liii. 10.) Such is the purpose and grace of Christ—"I lay down my life for the sheep." (John x. 15) Who are Christ's sheep, is afterwards plainly stated: "My sheep *hear my voice*, and I know them, and *they follow me*." (ver. 27.) The inspired Apostle has the same view of the intended scope of his Saviour's death: "Feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." (Acts xx. 28.) "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Eph. v. 25.) The Church of God is not all the world, but a selection from it. Nor does the Apostle intend the visible church: rather, it is the church of believers. It is "the body of Christ:" He is its Head of influence, as well as of government: and he will "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." In other Scriptures, we find the objects of the Saviour's dying love styled "his people:" "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.) "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. ii. 14)

These Scriptures, if I mistake not, will furnish a humble inquirer after the mind of the Spirit in the word with an unequivocal and explicit answer.

I wish to call the attention of my friend to another view of this subject. In the light of Scripture, I think I see, that "the power of Christ's resurrection" is of equal extent with the intended efficacy of his death: or, in other words, that the work of the Spirit of Christ in effectual calling, and sanctification, and glory, precisely demonstrates the extent of his purchase.

The Lord Jesus, in his mediatorial character acted as the common representative of those whom the Father had given him; his *people*, his *church*, his *sheep*, his *seed*. When he died, their ransom was paid: when he was raised again, it was for their justification. "The second Adam," to all his promised seed, his ransomed people, "is a quickening Spirit." Virtually, when their Surety was discharged and exalted, they were "quickened together with him, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" (Eph. ii. 5, 6.): "Christ the first fruits, and afterwards, they that are Christ's at his coming." Herein is a sure pledge of the conversion and everlasting salvation of all the Father had given him. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Ps. cx. 3.). Such was the joy which our Lord anticipated. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice." (John x. 16.)

Memorable is the representation the Apostle gives of "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." He traces it back to the resurrection of Christ, as if it were the continuance of the same act: "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places." (Eph. i. 19, 20.) The Holy Spirit, in this Scripture, plainly teaches, that the conversion of a sinner is a great work; that it is the work of God; that there is in it a display of the exceeding greatness of his power; and that this wondrous effect, wherever it appears, was ascertained by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

In perfect harmony with this sentiment is the representation of the Apostle Peter, when speaking of Christ as the sure foundation of his people's faith: "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.) *A lively stone!* A stone, by the action of inherent principles, *coming* to the foundation! The philosophy of nature would pronounce it an absurdity. And truly, it is a miracle of power and grace, when souls that were dead in trespasses and sin, are found alive to spiritual apprehensions and affections, and appear "fleeing for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before" them. This is the

wonderful effect of that "mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." That "living Stone" communicates a quickening power to ransomed myriads, who lie undistinguished from the rest in Nature's quarry, and constitutes them lively stones, and perpetuates the life it gives. Hence the subjects of renewing grace are said to be "risen with Christ," and to "seek those things which are above." Hence their new life takes its rise, and hence their distinguishing temper and character.

It is of importance, likewise, to remark, how explicitly and fully our Lord declares, that the effectual calling and salvation of sinners is the never-failing and necessary effect of the Father's purpose, and his own purchase: "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." (John vi. 37.) And on the other hand, how clearly he represents final impenitence and unbelief, as demonstrating a want of interest in his dying love! "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." (John x. 36.) In the great day, he will solemnly disown and reject the suit of ungodly sinners, as if he never had their salvation in view: "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 23.) But the good Shepherd knows the sheep he has ransomed: he will seek them out, and gather them home, and not one of them shall be lost.

The strongest expression, in favour of universal

redemption, that I recollect, is that of the Apostle John: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John ii. 2.) But if the blood of Christ was the ransom-price stipulated for the whole world, then evidently, and of necessity, all must be saved: the ransomed captives shall all be delivered. For "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Then that challenge belongs individually to all; "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 34.) "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (Rom. v. 10.) Approach thy Saviour, my soul, and hear from his own lips, whether he maketh intercession for transgressors universally. He speaks in the most explicit manner, as if he meant to be fully understood;—"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." (John xvii. 9.) The representation, therefore, of Paul must explain that of John:—"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 25, 26.) The design of the Spirit of God,

in both these Apostles, is to proclaim the full sufficiency of the death of Christ; and to declare the propitiatory, the mercy-seat, free of access to *believing* sinners universally. There is no exclusion of any nation or any language. Any individual of all the children of men, be his iniquities ever so multiplied and aggravated, whose heart is prepared to honour Christ as his Saviour, and who comes by faith, unto him, shall find "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Paul teaches, that the honour of God's *justice* is engaged for the salvation of those whom Christ has ransomed. God will be just, when he is "the justifier of him that believeth;" when he shall proclaim, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth the prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." (Zech. ix. 11.) Christ will have no further demand: "He shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be *satisfied*." You and I shall behold the extent of redeeming love in countless myriads; and, I trust, shall celebrate distinguishing mercy, in our own salvation: with a voice as loud, and a heart as warm, as any of theirs, we shall, in full assembly, sing, "Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

You ask again: Is the Divine visitation to all? Or, Are all men favoured with such a dispensation of the grace of God as is sufficient for their salvation?

Still remember, my dear friend, we are not consulting our feelings, but inquiring for facts.—I see no reason for one painful apprehension respecting the future state of infants, dying such. There is enough to satisfy us, that their salvation is fully secured by the death of Christ. How much they were on his heart, his opened arms, and his gracious words declare: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of *such is the kingdom of heaven.*" Herein is a ground of firm persuasion, that the grace of Christ will provide them an asylum in death; that he will prevent and surprise them with his salvation. What myriads of them may we realize, gathered around the throne! How sweet and how loud their strains!

> Babes thither caught from womb and breast,
> Claim right to praise above the rest;
> Because they found the happy shore
> They never saw nor sought before.

The determination of the Most High respecting the everlasting state of the heathen, remains, as yet, within his own breast. It were presumption to dictate to the Judge of all. Truly, I should have heart-felt joy in the discovery of such a dispensation of grace to them, as has been asserted. But what shall I say? The regards of Providence are, doubtless, extended to them. Their lusts and passions are not entirely without restraint: and something of Nature's light they still retain. Yet, alas! their gross ignorance, and extreme stupidity! Care,

ful researches have produced a doubt, respecting vast territories of them, whether they have any, even the least, idea of the being of a God. True it is, that "light is come into the world, which lighteth every man." (John i. 9.) Our hemisphere has been blessed with this light. But they, as yet, "are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death." (Luke i. 79.) They seem to want the first notices of breaking day. Yet the time to favour them will come; and the messengers of the grace of God will go under a Divine commission, "to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts xxvi. 18.)

Indeed, with reference to multitudes in civilized and Christian countries, would to God that this visitation were manifest! There wants no proof that "the world lieth in wickedness," under the power of "the wicked one," "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." And till the Gospel comes, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost," I am constrained, by the testimony of Scripture, to lament over them as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God;" nay, and "dead in trespasses and sins."

In the light of Scripture, it is far from being manifest, that men are all born in a state of grace and favour; that Christ hath obtained reconciliation for all; and that none miss of heaven, but those who reject Christ by unbelief. That confession of the

Apostle respecting himself and his fellow-Christians, constrains a very different sentiment; "and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." (Eph. ii. 3.)

Indeed, I am obliged to admit the doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty, when I contemplate the distribution of the good things of this life. And I must confess to my friend, that I cannot look within me, or around me, through heaven, or through earth, but the discriminations of the grace of God appear in a strong light. Sometimes my thoughts rove among the spirits of the just in heaven: nor can I meet an individual there, who is not ready to ascribe his salvation to distinguishing grace. I apply to Abraham, (Gen. xii.); to Isaac; and to Jacob. (Gen. xxi. 12., Rom. ix. 11, 12.); and each, eagerly adverting to his own history, sings with rapture of preventing and surprising mercy. While I am addressing the posterity of Jacob, (Josh. xxiv. 2, 3, 4., Deut. vii. 7., Ezek. xvi. 2, 3.); and David, (Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71); and Jeremiah, (Jer. i. 5); the warm spirit of Paul chides the inquiry, and, with a heart enflamed anew with the subject, proclaims *his* love, "who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace;" (Acts ix. 15. Gal. i. 15, 16.); and snatched him, going to Damascus, as "a brand out of the fire." Then, looking with joy towards the Throne, in the name of all his kindred saints, he exclaims, He "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works,

but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.)

Then I look into the Scriptures: there I find it was a subject of Christ's ministry, "the faithful and true witness." He preached it to the Nazarenes in his first sermon, and it turned their admiration into murderous rage. (Luke iv. 25.) He connected it with the gracious design of his incarnation: "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John x. 11.) He charged the memory of his disciples with this reflection; "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." (John xv. 16.) With peculiar solemnity, yet lively joy, he gives to his heavenly Father the glory of his sovereignty; and to this ascribes the conversion of sinners: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Luke x. 21.) In his intercessory prayer, John xvii. he thus represents his commission, "that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John xvii. 2.) He notices the extent of his intercession: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (ver. 20. 24.) He realizes the recompence of his humiliation, and the increase of his kingdom: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given

me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."

Paul's Epistles breathe the spirit of his Master. The saints are "the called according to God's purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and justified, and glorified." (Rom. viii. 29, 30.) In the next chapter, he explains and defends the doctrine. (Rom. ix.) In an opening page of the Book of Life, he beholds the names of his dear friends at Thessalonica, and in effectual calling beholds the operation of everlasting love: "Knowing brethren, beloved, *your election of God.* For our Gospel came unto you, not in word only, but also in power." (1 Thess. i. 4, 5.) Observe the glowing ardour of his language when he congratulates them, "because God" had "from the beginning chosen" them "to salvation." (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.) And how his spirit seems to exult in this grace with the Ephesians! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world." (Eph. i. 3—6.) It is likewise observable how this view of the truth of God relieves his mind, while contemplating affecting instances of seduction and apostacy: "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this

seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) Peter addresses believers in Christ as "a chosen generation," "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." (1 Pet. ii. 9.) James sees with delight "the poor of this world," by discriminating grace, made "heirs of the kingdom," (James i. 5.) John thinks with joy of "the *Book of Life* of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," (Rev. xiii. 8; Rev. xxi. 27): and hails their present security and future glory, whose names are written therein.

These Scripture testimonies, to me, appear fully to establish the doctrine of God's sovereignty in his eternal purpose. We behold an equal exercise of sovereignty *in the measures taken to carry that purpose into effect.*

If we trace *the progress of the Gospel*, and *the course of its ministers*, we see and confess that "all things are of God." Paul, and his fellow-labourers. "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia: they essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not." (Acts xvi. 6,7.) Yet by the same authority, "the word of this salvation" was sent to Antioch. (Acts. xiii. 26.) Paul receives a special commission, directing him to Corinth, because the Lord "has much people in" that "city." (Acts xviii. 10.) And "Simeon hath declared how God, at the first, did visit the Gentiles, *to take out of them* a people for his Name." (Acts xv. 14.) There is a

manifest discrimination, respecting *outward means* in the present day. What a privileged isle is ours, when compared with the far greater part of the world! "He hath not dealt so with" many "nations—." Yet in Britain these advantages are not universally enjoyed. *Here* is the bright shining of Gospel truth; *there* unhappy multitudes "sit in darkness." "The wind" that "bloweth where it listeth," has hither borne the fructifying cloud: "the Lord commanded the blessing." There the curse of barrenness appears, as if it had been said, "let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you." How shall we account for this difference, but by resolving it into the sovereign will of God, who

——moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform:

who grants the means where he has a purpose of grace to effect; and whose "goings" are still seen, where he has "to seek and to save that which is lost!"

If we contemplate the *different success of the Gospel*, we are constrained to acknowledge the same sovereignty. When God works, what feeble means become effectual; and how unexpectedly and quickly is the change produced: while, in many affecting instances, the most probable means, employed with the greatest earnestness, are long, very long, tried in vain. Here and there we meet with a Lydia, whose heart the Lord has opened. We are enabled to congratulate some: "Ye were some time darkness, but now are ye light in the

members are all created anew in Christ Jesus. I hear the creature man give glory to God, acknowledging, "Thine eye did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Why should this acknowledgment be deemed inapplicable to the Head of the Church? It is the joy of a renewed mind to notice his reference to his Father's purpose in that delightful prayer; "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory!" But hereafter, when he shall behold his glorious body the Church made perfect in holiness, how transporting will it be to hear him say, "Father, behold! I and the children whom thou hast given me!"

I appeal, yet further, to the understanding of my friend, and ask, Whether it be not perfectly *fit and just* that God should discriminate? You are sensible of the misery of our natural state. None have any ability for their own salvation; none any claim; no reasonable complaint can be offered; "every mouth is stopped;" and if any are saved, it must be "to the praise of the glory of Free Grace." If others perish, it is after God has endured them with much long-suffering; they are "vessels of wrath fitted" (not by any operation of the Divine decree, but by their own sin, fitted) "for destruction." (Rom. ix. 22.)

Let us take care that we have right apprehensions of the Divine decree. If I conceive aright, the decree of God relates not so much to the actions of men, as to the Divine proceedings. It determines not, at least directly, what man shall do, but what God will do. Man, as a depraved creature, if left to himself, will do wickedly, and, by fatal necessity, must perish. God, in his just and wise and holy decree, resolves how far sin shall be permitted and punished; and to what extent his mercy shall be manifested. Then, the doctrine of predestination, fairly stated, cannot be said to make God the author of sin. Wherever there is repentance and faith, "the exceeding greatness of God's power" is to be acknowledged. But when man sins, and continues in impenitence and unbelief, the cause is to be found, not in God's decree, but in the depravity and perverseness of his own nature. The decree establishes no fatal necessity; it imposes no restraint on human liberty. True, it permitted the fall of man; it permitted the cruelty of Joseph's brethren, and the murderous proceedings of the Jews and Romans; yet they acted with unrestrained freedom: and if the wrath of God still abide on the guilty sinner, he will be confounded, and never able to open his mouth in answer to that appeal, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?" (Jer. ii. 17.) "The *wages*," the just recompence, "of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ

our Lord." It is likewise to be remarked: The decree offers no discouragement to the use of means. It is not a determination that men shall be saved, let them live as they will. It comprehends the means with the end. The saved of the Lord are "chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. ii. 13.) In like manner, with invariable exactness is decreed the annual product of the earth, the term of man's life, and the issue of every scheme and pursuit of the human heart. Yet, hence arises no impediment to the exertions of the husbandman, the physician, or the merchant. It gave unto Paul the lives of all who sailed with him; yet they must continue "in the ship, or they cannot be saved." (Acts xxvii. 23.)

This view of the decree will help us to a ready interpretation of some passages of Scripture that at first sight may appear hard to be understood:—"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Rom. ix. 13.) Mercy saves the one; the other is left under a righteous condemnation. It is said of God, that "whom he will, he hardeneth;" that he "hardened Pharoah's heart," (ver. 18.) and the heart of the Jews." (John xii. 4.) Nothing more is meant than that he withheld his Spirit from them. He took off the restraint from their lusts, and left them in the power of Satan.—I have often regarded water, in its natural state, and without the influence of the sun, as a striking emblem of the heart of man, without the grace of God. It is cold and hard as

fee; it obstinately resisteth every impression. Then David's prayer shall be mine, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me!"

> Dear Saviour, steep this rock of mine,
> In thine own crimson sea:
> None but a bath of blood Divine
> Can melt the flint away.

Indeed, my friend, I consider it, not only as just and fit, that God should discriminate, and that from eternity, but I cannot account for the salvation of any one sinner but on this ground. It *must of necessity be so.* Does the word of truth represent man in his natural state as "dead in trespasses and sins?" destitute of every degree of Divine affection or apprehension? Solemn thought! "Who then can be saved?" My only consolation is found in that assurance, "With man, indeed, this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. xix. 25, 26.) This is our encouragement in prophesying to dry bones. And does God, in any instance, effect so great a change? Then, from eternity he foreknew it. And if he foreknew it, it was because he decreed it. Nor can I think that the notices of this decree, in the Word of God, while accompanied with so many precious promises to encourage penitential and believing prayer, can reasonably resist the hope of one sensible sinner. Rather should it enliven expectation, and embolden prayer.

In reading the Scriptures, you will find some

passages that clearly support this doctrine; and others, that seem to wear a different aspect. One distinction, if I mistake not, generally serves as a clue to an easy interpretation: I mean, the distinction between the *covenant of grace* and *the dispensation of that covenant.*—The covenant, as a sacred stipulation between the Father and the Son from all eternity, is, with reference to the parties contracted for, determinate; to them its promises are unconditional and absolute. The foundation on which they stand is firm; "in hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie promised" to Christ, their Representative, "before the world began." (Tit. i. 2.)—The *dispensation* of the covenant, in the overture of the Gospel, is indefinite and conditional. Our God appears on a throne of mercy: he "hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" his sceptre is mercy; his proclamations mercy; his apostles and ministers are commissioned to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And they have authority for saying, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God!" These are the means by which the chief Shepherd is pleased "to seek and to save that which is lost." Thus the eternal decree is brought into effect, and unbelievers are left without excuse.—Observing this distinction, you will readily see, that, in reality, there is nothing contradictory between absolute promises and conditional overtures. The former belong to

the covenant, and apply only to Christ and to his spiritual seed. The latter belong to the dispensation of the covenant, and are applicable to all who hear the Gospel.

Were the question now to be asked, "Has every man, under the Gospel, a dispensation of grace sufficient for his salvation?" I had much rather state certain premises, and leave the conclusion. On the one hand, it is a fact, that man in himself, and by nature, is "without strength." "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Yet, on the other hand, every man under the Gospel is favoured with that discovery of mercy, and aid of the Spirit, which, if he perish in unbelief, will be found an awful aggravation of his guilt. In this reference, that beautiful metaphor is peculiarly applicable; "We behold with delight the colours of the rainbow; we clearly distinguish every one of them. Yet where is the accurate observer who will undertake to determine the exact point where one colour terminates, and another begins?" (Dr. Hawker's Sermon at Bermondsey.) The Lord give you understanding in all these things! Especially be it your wisdom and mine, to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure!"

I remain,

In the endearments of Christian affection,

Yours,

J. B.

as many even of his dear children have, under the heavy pressure of outward trouble; nor has he appointed me long nights of disconsolate darkness, and left me to suffer the agony of a wounded spirit, and to lament in vain an absent God. "He knows our frame, he remembereth that we are but dust;" therefore has he shewn me his tender mercies. Nay, he has made all his goodness to pass before me; he has accompanied the bitterest cup, which he has put into mine hand, with the kindest expressions of his love, and enabled me to gather the choicest and most beneficial fruits from the most piercing sorrows: and O! how great is his goodness which he has wrought for me! how rich his bounty, how multiplied his favours, and how constantly renewed! How many creature-comforts has he rendered comforts indeed, making them the medium by which to convey the sweet expressions of his love, the fulfilment of covenant promises, the returns of prayer!

But the burden of my prayer, and, I trust, the earnest desire of my soul, is, to have a heart prepared to shew forth the praises of the Lord, to serve him with fervent affection, and at the same time in simplicity and godly sincerity; to pursue no other end but his glory, and to feel the mighty influence of his dying love more and more constraining me. Alas! that amidst the experience I have of the great mercy of God, I should have reason to acknowledge, with grief and shame, the want of more fer-

vour of spirit, and more singleness of heart, in serving the Lord; and that, under such obligations, my heart should prove like the deceitful, and therefore ineffectual, bow, whose arrow wants a right direction, or a sufficient force, to bear it to the mark. "Unite my heart, O God, to fear thy Name!" Blessed be his Name! he has not, I trust, withheld his grace from me in this respect: he has given me time after time to see reason to suspect and closely to examine my heart: he has laid me low in shame and grief before him; but I trust he has given me more grace, and enabled me to serve him more in truth and love. I trust the time to favour our little hill of Sion is come—a time of refreshing it seems to be. But we would rejoice with trembling. May no accursed thing be found amongst us; nothing to grieve the good Spirit of our God!

I rejoice, my dear children, in the mercy shewn you in providence and grace, respecting time and eternity. This God, I trust, will be your God for ever and ever. He will be your children's God after you; and this is an inheritance that rises high above all price, but that of the precious blood of Christ. 'Tis too well secured for the boar out of the wood to waste, or the policy of earth or hell to alienate; and it is too excellent for time itself to destroy; it is eternal in the heavens. Oh! be it your concern to live near this God of love. That is a seat of relief from distracting cares, from over-

whelming sorrows, and insupportable burdens.—When he is near, his yoke is easy, and his burden is light; and in the keeping of his commandments there is great reward. You have sought his friendship, and found it, because he first drew you with the cords of his love. Be careful to improve every expedient, and every opportunity to maintain the intercourses of that friendship; and with the increase of prayer and praise, take care that a pure offering ascends to God. Watch against every thing that would divide your heart from him, and then the condescensions of his grace will encourage such a holy boldness and wrestling importunity in your address, such a firmness in your faith, and, with all, such a humble resignation to the will of God, as will be a blessed evidence to yourselves of the true spirit of adoption: and well is it said, "We that believe do enter into rest;" so he giveth unto his beloved rest—rest amidst the snares of prosperity, and the troubles of adversity; rest in life's stormy sea, and death's gloomy vale; and this rest the sweet earnest of rest in Heaven, where waves and storms shall never come.

I rejoice, my children, in your renewed experience of great mercy, and, I trust, that that covenant God, before whom our fathers walked, the God who has redeemed us from many evils, will bless not you only, but your offspring; and then, whether you leave them by death, or they you, there

will be a joyful meeting in Heaven, where there shall be no more death.—In this hope, and much tender affection, I remain yours,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER III.

TO MR. AND MRS. B——.

Tooting, January 20, 1798.

MY DEAR J—— AND M——,

I HAVE a great deal of mercy to acknowledge, as my days and years increase. He is faithful that has promised. How great is his goodness, and how various! Its upper springs how rich, how satisfactory and permanent! and its nether springs, how refreshing, how salutary and consolatory! Blessed be God, who satisfieth me with good things! My cup runneth over. The gifts of his hand, and the promises of his word, furnish a goodly heritage. But I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth. Blessed be God, that in so great a measure my house is so with God as he taught my heart to desire, and as his covenant-promise bid me expect. "The Lord perfect that which concerneth us." I trust he will, "for his mercy endureth for ever." He has shewn us great mercy, and he will shew us further mercy. Oh! to be able to keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal

life. Precious Mediator! how full of righteousness, and how full of grace; what may not be expected from the advocacy of one so high in dignity, and so transcendant in compassion? What a mercy to be found amongst the subjects of such a Prince, the followers of such a Captain; who are all called, and chosen, and faithful. They are all called to a hard conflict; they are required to take up the cross and follow Christ, to wrestle with flesh and blood, and to endure hardness. But, however painful the conflict, they are well provided, and well supported; and when the conflict is over, they leave the field with shouts of victory: then are the saints joyful in glory: they sing aloud upon their beds. Glorious hope! they shall enter into peace: they shall rest on their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. Delightful banquet, with what great peace, what perfect rest enjoyed! how sweetened by the remembrance of past alarms, and toils, and troubles, and deliverances; and how heightened by the explanation of the whole conduct of the Leader, by the disclosure of many, many surprising discoveries of his tender mercies, never before thought of; and by the condescending complacency and love with which he confesses their names, recounts the instances of their fidelity, their love, their zeal, and proclaims, "Well done good and faithful servants!" No matter what the labours and the storms of the day be, if it shall soon close in a rest so sweet, so perfect, so glorious. Blessed Jesus, why have I

been made to hear thy voice, and follow thee; why hast thou spread thy banner of love over me, and inspired my heart with so animating an hope, while so many around me are enslaved to sin, and labouring for that which is not bread? How shall I duly express the gratitude which love so great and so discriminating demands? How devoted, how full of zeal should a ransomed and renewed sinner be? O may we all appear to love Him who first loved us, who so greatly loved us! May we walk worthy of such a Friend, and pursue the prize of our high calling, with a becoming ardour! May we walk in habitual and intimate friendship with this blessed Immanuel, dwelling in the secret place of the Most High! and that will be the best preparation for clouds and storms. Blessed life of faith, how full of peace, peace not easily shaken! how sure its supports, how rich its consolations! O that we could fully yield ourselves to God, with a firm confidence in his sufficiency, his truth and grace; and in the daily actings of faith renew the delightful intercourse; still looking unto Jesus, and leaning on him! Then, we should be in a great measure kept from the fear of evil. Undismayed by frowning appearances, we should say, "I know whom I have believed;" and in his matchless goodness he would say to our souls, "I am thy salvation:" fear not, "I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine." This is the best antidote to the impression of the alarms of the present day; the best preparation for

threatened evils. Indeed, here will be found an effectual security from all real evil, and a rich provision for strong and everlasting consolation. Blessed alarms, if they revive our faith and love, and constrain us to cry, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" May we make it our rest, and dwell there! Then shall we find it a rest indeed! Even when tossed with tempests, we shall enjoy a sweet satisfaction in reflecting that stormy winds and waves are our Father's servants, and perform with perfect exactness his pleasure; no matter then, though we cannot foresee the particular event. You, my dear children, have been, I doubt not, solacing yourselves as Christians and parents, with such thoughts as these, under the present national disquietudes; and hence you have found encouragement under your present family exercise.—Our love to all our dear friends.

I am, my dear children,

Yours in perfect bonds,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER IV.

TO MR. AND MRS. B——.

Tooting, Dec. 21, 1803.

MY DEAR J— AND M—,

WHEN your very affecting information came to hand, I was just finishing the transcript in short-

hand of a sermon on Matthew xiv. 22; the doctrine of which is, "The Lord Jesus sometimes makes use of a kind of merciful violence with his people for their good."—Your account of our dear little Mary's alarming illness is to our natural feelings very afflicting. Yet this is the hand of Him who bringeth down to the grave, and raiseth up again. And perhaps God, who heareth prayer, may, in love to her soul and yours, release her from her present confinement, and mercifully raise her up again. Yet, if our Heavenly Father sees that a different procedure would be the occasion of greater advantage, "let him do with us as seemeth good unto him!" "His ways are all judgment," mercy, truth, and love. Blessed Leader! how shall he bruise Satan under our feet, and make us meet for heaven, without resisting our creature-love, and emptying us from vessel to vessel, and leading us about to shew us the character of vanity inscribed on whatever our hearts are prone to cleave to below the skies? How shall he open his heart of love to us, but by those dispensations which not only excite our more earnest desires for his presence, but which are the channels through which his choicest gifts are most richly conveyed?—My dear children, let not your hearts be troubled at the appearance of the dark cloud that hovers over you. Let a Saviour come *when* he will, and *how* he will: he never comes but on a design of love; he ever brings a blessing incomparably greater than that which he takes away. Could

you look into the cloud and see who has made it his chariot; and beyond it, and realize the issue of this visitation; you would chide the murmurings of flesh and blood: you would hail his approach with, "Even so come, Lord Jesus!" You are called upon to bring presents unto him who ought to be feared. You have a flower in your garden of peculiar beauty and fragrancy; and to whom can you present it with so much grateful pleasure, as to him who gave himself for you! Where can it be so safe, receive such honour, and bloom so bright and fair, as in the bosom of a Saviour's love! Reluctant nature cannot suffer the separation without many a parting tear. But, remember! "he shed a thousand drops for you, a thousand drops of richest blood." I trust, my dear children, He who causeth you to pass through the fire, will be with you to preserve and purify you, and bring you to the enjoyment of the fuller manifestations and endearments of his love. You are not called with Abraham, to offer your only child unto the Lord; or, with Aaron, to hold your peace when two together are wrathfully driven away in their wickedness. It is a child of the promise; a child once dedicated to God, whose grace, and greatness, and promise, unite to encourage your expectations, that he will do for her incomparably beyond all you could either ask or think. Under these circumstances, it is no calamity to have a child, however dear, removed from the evil of the present world. But it is the offering of your first fruits that your God seems to

expect. Nor can you withhold it. You will present it with your own hands and heart, and then you will have to expect a more abundant blessing. The offering of the first fruits is the consecration of your whole harvest. May the Lord proclaim, "From this time will I bless you," and make all your's his own! Yet we will entertain an hope of our dear Mary. May the Lord, in the power of his grace and love, be with you!

LETTER V.

TO MR. AND MRS. B——,

Tooting, Jan. 26, 1809.

MY DEAR J— AND M—,

PROBABLY, before the arrival of these lines, your dear child will have dropped mortality. You will have resigned your tender charge to the will of Him who would, that he in early life should be with him, where he is, to behold his glory. It was his Heavenly Father's pleasure. Your dear child has lost the parting tear, and all the agony of separation and dissolution, amidst the delights and glories of a better home. "It was good," he cries, "to be *there*; praise everlasting to the God of my salvation, who provided for me the benefit of spiritual instruction, and the fostering care of Christian affection: but it is far better to be *here*."

You, my dear children, while suffering from wounded nature, will find the anguish relieved by consolations which carnal minds know not of. Precious faith, the principle of spiritual and heavenly life, will furnish occasion for sweet resignation, complacency, and praise. Sense must not, cannot, destroy or interrupt the harmony of the song you have to raise. Mercy, covenant mercy, gave you this child—a precious gift, still your's, but removed to an inheritance, which your Saviour has purchased, and is preparing for you in the better country, even the heavenly; his mercy counted and made you faithful; and his mercy, whatever sense would suggest, has recompensed your faithful care, even a hundred fold.

Others of your dear children you have still with you. The hand of the Lord, I trust, is on them, to prepare them for the same honours. It may be his pleasure, by your means, in connection with others, to prepare them to serve him, with faith, and zeal, and love, here upon earth; and to shine in Christian affections and habits, as lights in the world. They may follow you, and those already arrived, and increase—I will not say complete—the happy band, now gathering. Even children's children, in successive generations, may still follow, proclaiming the truth and grace of a covenant God. Precious covenant! what a cord of love, let down from Heaven, to raise thither, from the wreck and ruin of man's fallen estate, every poor sinner, made willing in

the day of the Redeemer's power! Precious encouragement given to believing parents, in their efforts to rescue their offspring from the sin and misery of the fall! Blessed parents, who are not faithless, but believing; who feel the constraints of love Divine, take hold of the promise, and labour and pray for the spiritual life of their dear children, the Lord working with them! Your labour, you have reason to assure yourselves and one another, will not be in vain in the Lord: and this expectation, on the ground of covenant mercy, is enough to silence and to satisfy. The Lord bless you with great grace and fatherly consolation! I am, in tender affection, your father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER VI.

TO MR. AND MRS. B——.

Tooting, January 25, 1805.

MY DEAR J— AND M—,

I REJOICE in your consolations. My soul hath magnified the Lord, who hath put a new song into your mouth, even praise unto your God; yet, while our mercies are great, we cannot wonder that the cup of salvation given us here should have a mixture of bitterness. When sin, that worst of evils, that vile leprosy, which has polluted our

whole frame, shall be perfectly done away, and our tattered, filthy garments shall be exchanged for the fine linen, clean and white, the great Physician of souls will prescribe his bitter draughts no more. The hope is animating and glorious. Death, in all its tyrannizing power and distressful influence, will be lost and swallowed up in life; and every affection and thought be in perfect harmony with the holy will of Him who both died, and rose, and reigns, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, and present them without spot before the Throne of God.

These glorious hopes we owe
To Jesu's dying love.

This great and good work is in the hands of Him who is an able Physician: he knows our frame, and never fails in the choice or the efficacy of the remedies he applies. Like a skilful Refiner, he values the metal too much to suffer it to be reduced by the extremity of heat, or its undue continuance in the furnace. "This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." His nature is infinitely pure, his measures infinitely just and wise, his favour and love an infinite and eternal source of felicity; and the manifestations he is making of his glorious perfections in all his works, will, when the veil of mortality shall have dropped, be an object for saints and angels, through all eternity, to contemplate with wonder and delight.

At present, they appear to us like a distant object. Mountains intervene, which our trembling hearts despair of climbing. This gross earth often eclipses much of their brightness. Clouds often rise and intercept the beams that had revived our hope. At best, we see but through a glass darkly; and if but a spot be found upon that glass, or a vapour interpose, we fancy darkness in the object. Unbelief suggests, "The Lord has forsaken me—my God hath forgotten me." But let God's character and procedure be seen through a fair medium, and we shall see and confess he is all light; he is spotless purity, he is perfect love, he is unerring wisdom; an immense ocean of bliss. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!" Indeed, we cannot see him, but in his own light; then will we implore larger measures of his Spirit—then will our souls wait on him in his ordinances—then we will yield ourselves to him, in whatever measures he shall adopt to further his gracious designs respecting us. What though he make a cloud his *chariot*, in himself there is no darkness at all. There is nothing but love in his heart;—the clouds will vanish;—the love of God will not always be obscured; it will shed its refreshing beams upon us, chide our unbelief, and charge us never more to entertain one unworthy thought of God. Be this, my dear children, your comfort, and may your painful exercises open to you brighter discoveries of the Fountain of Light, and give you to know more

clearly and believe more firmly the love which God hath towards you.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER VII.

TO MR. AND MRS. B——.

Tooting, January, 1800.

MY DEAR J— AND M—,

In the review of the dispensations of Providence respecting you, the past year, I feel constrained to condole with you, yet still more to congratulate you. You have been out at sea, tossed with tempests; but Jesus, the Friend, the Deliverer, was near; he spake, and hushed the storm; he smiled, and peace diffused through all your soul. Clouds and darkness had been round about him, but mercy and truth went before his face. O! let me review the awful cloud with grateful joy, which my Lord was pleased to make his chariot, wherein to honour me with a visit, so condescending and beneficial. Let me remember, with gratitude, the dark and stormy night, wherein my Saviour appeared walking on the waters, sweetly saying, "It is I, be not afraid."

My dear children, it is my joy to think, that if your griefs have abounded, your consolations have much more abounded. May the Lord shew you more and more of his mercy, and give you, by his wonder-working power in your minds, and his fu-

ture dealings with you, more enlarged and delightful views and experience of the unmeasurable grace of his heart. Or, in other words, the blessing that I would always ask in prayer for you, is, that our God would fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness. Endeared as you are to me, the warmest affections of my heart cannot dictate a wish that extends so far, or that is not comprehended in the good pleasure of God's goodness towards you.—What an encouraging representation of the eternal God! It might have been dark midnight with my soul. I might have been pierced with the agonizing terrors of vindictive Justice, without one beam of hope to relieve the dreadful horror; but I look to the Altar of God, where I might have found him a consuming fire, and my wondering soul beholds his only begotten and infinitely-beloved Son, bleeding even beneath his own hand, to make atonement for my sins. Was ever love like this love? When I contemplate the operations of his providence *for* me, and of his Spirit *in* me, from my helpless infancy to the present moment, in the review I sweetly "taste and see that the Lord is good." How great is his goodness! how multiplied, beyond all calculation, are the expressions of it! "They are more in number than the sand." I look into his word: I read the declarations of his love in exceeding great and precious promises: I search and find my own worthless name in those promises; and while I see every good thing secured to me, by the truth of God, in

time, and behold eternity opening with its transcendent joys and glories before me, my admiring soul exclaims, "Who am I, O Lord God?" I would fain acknowledge, in grateful service and exalted praises, the great goodness of God to me; but, in comparison therewith, my best and most costly offerings are contemptible; my warmest affections and most fervent songs fall infinitely short of the sacrifice I would present. Nay, sometimes my wondering soul, laden and almost overpowered with the great and multiplied benefits conferred upon me, sighs like a poor insolvent and pennyless debtor looking over the statement of his creditor's demands, and says, "What shall I, what can I render?" Yes, and I sometimes feel and confess, that could I raise a note more sweet and more strong than Gabriel sings, and still prolong it in time and through eternity, it would be but a very inadequate acknowledgment of the obligations which the infinite goodness of God has laid me under. I *must* be, and I *would* be still, a debtor to the mercy of my God. But whither am I carried? I thought to have written, as I was beginning pleasantly to think, of the good pleasure of the Divine Goodness. Perhaps it is the happiest possible form of expression which words could furnish, to give us the fullest, the sweetest, idea of that infinite love of God towards his people which no language can fully declare. It denotes, perhaps, the *heart* of love, whence God's covenant-benefits flow, and the

smile of benevolence that sweetens the gifts his hand confers. It was according to the good pleasure of his will, that any of the fallen race of man were "*predestinated to the adoption of sons.*" It was his good pleasure that his beloved Son *should be made sin for them*; and when he sees the travail of his soul *in their effectual calling*, it is "the pleasure of the Lord that prospers in his hands." This is his will concerning them, even their *sanctification:* and feeble and comparatively few as they are, "it is their Father's good pleasure to *give them the kingdom.*" Blessed God! it is a sweet taste he here affords us of his goodness; yet his dearest children have here but a taste. What tongue can declare, what glorious angel can shew forth all his goodness, and "all the good pleasure of his goodness;" all that his endearing characters of Redeemer, Shepherd, Father, Friend, contain—all that his providence and his Spirit impart—all that his promises include—and all that is comprehended in that vast ocean, his own infinite nature. But how excellent is the loving kindness of God! I wish, my dear children, that your souls may be habitually entertained and delighted, with the charming representation which this passage gives of the operations of God, in his providence and by his Spirit, respecting his chosen people. What is the design which engages all his perfections, to which all his measures are directed? It is to fulfil in them *all the good pleasure of his goodness.* To our imperfect sense his dispensations

wear a various aspect: but when he gives, and when he denies; when he giveth peace, and when he causeth trouble; when he smiles, and when he frowns, he is uniformly uttering the love, and fulfilling the purpose, of his heart. Then, why art thou cast down, O my soul? Happy believer! in what a paradise of peace and blessedness does this sweet assurance place him! No lion is there—no subtle serpent there—nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; for thy God is there, and with infinite condescension and love brings his own all-sufficiency, and engages all his infinite perfections, to secure, to perfect, and to perpetuate thy bliss.—Nay, he has, in providing for thy strong consolation, pledged his truth to do thee good, and that in the best way. Then, "here am I, let him do with me as seemeth him good." I must not prescribe, I must not complain; this were to grieve mine infinitely gracious Friend: nay, and to sin against my own soul. No, my dear children, but "delight yourselves in the Lord, and he shall give you the desires of your heart; commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." He will put a restraint on all your enemies, on earth and in hell; he will give his angels charge concerning you; he will give commandment to universal nature to save you; he will bear you on his shoulder, and on his heart; he will put his Spirit within you, as a pledge of everlasting love. O! the false opinion of true blessedness which men form, when

they judge by outward appearance; the vast difference between a believer and an unbeliever; the importance of making our calling and election sure; the fearful evil of sin, which so often grieves the Holy Spirit, and deprives even believers of the comforting sense and evidence of the love of God! "O Israel! if thou wilt hearken unto me, there shall no strange God be in thee."

Take this, my dear children, as your encouragement and directory in prayer, for yourselves and your dear children; and let every wish for temporal good be lost in this one concern, that God would fulfil in you and in them all, the good pleasure of his goodness. It is a lovely expression of Christian benevolence, in a minister, a parent, or a friend. May all the privilege and benefit of it belong to you and yours! May this heavenly Sun shine on your path! and the wilderness will blossom around you. You will have sweet peace and content in every condition: you will have a delightful prospect of the everlasting hills, on this side Jordan: and when about to loose from earth, you will feel the sweet influence of a hope big with immortality. Another thought strikes me on this subject. It is this:—what benevolence should be found in the children of such a Father, the subjects of grace so unparalleled and amazing; and how carefully should we cultivate those tempers which are well-pleasing to God! The humble, the grateful, the patient, the believing, the praying, the fervent, the benevolent

soul he delights to honour; and what greater honour can he confer on any of his creatures, than putting his own Spirit within them. May this honour, in an eminent degree, be yours and mine!

I am, my dear children,

in dearest affection, your's,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER VIII.

TO MR. AND MRS. B——.

Tooting, July, 1800.

MY DEAR J— AND M—,

I DESIRE to rejoice with you in the renewed experience you have of Divine mercy, and to join with you in celebrating the praises of JEHOVAH JIREH. Our God provides, that the voice of rejoicing and salvation should be in the tabernacles of those whose hope is in him. He does not leave us to converse only with wants, and griefs, and toils, and terrors, in the wilderness, but he makes all his goodness to pass before us. How often does he surprize and cheer us with a beam of his glory, shed through the medium of some particularly gracious dispensation, thereby assuring us that he is ever mindful of his covenant! Blessed be God for these tokens for good; these notices of his presence and his power: they revive our hope, and brighten our prospects, and cheer

us in our progress: they are expressions of that love which is from everlasting: they are streams from that river which maketh glad the city of our God: the streams are *then* especially refreshing when we can trace them to the fountain, and taste the love of God in them. Blessed God! how sweet is that word when spoken by his Spirit to the heart, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee!" O! how did he draw us? He saw us involved in sin and misery, guilt and wrath. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" and death and the curse were passing as merciless tyrants through our world, and marking the whole race of men for eternal ruin, when God in his great mercy was pleased to check their dreadful triumphs, to limit their conquests, and decree, "Hitherto shall ye go, but no further." There is an election of grace. A remnant must be saved, and "He saveth us and calleth us with an holy calling; not according to our own works, but according to his purpose and grace, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began." The loud thunders of wrathful threatenings were followed by a small still voice of mercy, uttering exceeding great and precious promises, "Come, children, to your Father's arms;" "Fear not, I have redeemed thee;" "Sin shall not have dominion over you;" "He shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," and "death and hell shall be cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone:" "Look

unto me, and be ye saved," &c. Charming sounds! what a Day-spring from on high herein visited our wretched world! what a blessed hope is inspired within us! "This is the promise that he hath promised us, *eternal life*.... and this life is in his Son." And this comprehends every blessing connected with it: pardon, renovation, sanctification, provision of temporal good, and a safe passage through death to glory. The promises were first given to Christ, and they are sealed and ratified by his death. Through him they are proposed indefinitely to sinners of mankind; and they are a firm ground of consolation to all who believe. Sometimes they are styled the Gospel; and "blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." Sometimes they are represented as legacies bequeathed in the testament of a deceased Friend. Sometimes they are spoken of as articles comprehended in a covenant or free grant of privileges, solemnly confirmed and ratified. The objects of this rich and everlasting mercy, while in their natural state, cannot be distinguished by mortal eye, though their names are all written in the Lamb's book of life. But they will be distinguished by the regards they pay to these overtures of mercy. Others may admit the veracity of the Scriptures, and be well skilled in religion as a science; they may give their assent to all important truths as matters of speculation; but the sheep of Christ alone hear and know the voice of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls in the Gospel. Their hearts crave the experience of the sal-

vation revealed, as one perishing with hunger and thirst craves bread or water: they believe with the heart, and earnestly desire the blessing contained in the promises, as their chiefest good, willing to account all things but loss if they may but win Christ and be found in him. They follow Christ as his disciples, with lowly teachable minds, to be instructed by him; as wretched sinners, to be justified by his righteousness, and sanctified and filled with his Spirit; and as devoted subjects, to know and do their Redeemer's will, and find protection and delight under the shadow of his wings. How instructive is the representation of the faith of the patriarchs! They had not received the promises; they had not seen Christ, the sum of them, come in the flesh; "but having seen them afar off, they were persuaded of them, and embraced them, &c." What a beautiful gradation! They saw the promised blessings afar off; they were persuaded of them; they embraced them; and then they practically and habitually applied themselves to seek the possession of them. How descriptive of the heart and life of a believer! While to carnal minds, the blessings of salvation are so far off, that they see nothing of their excellence, *He* has his mind enlightened to behold their attractive glory. Faith is the eye by which to see the king in his beauty: a spiritual apprehension, a supernatural capacity to see spiritual and heavenly things.—The sphere of Nature's brightest capacity lies far below these exalted objects. Represent to the natural man,

the awful state of an unbelieving sinner, and urge him to flee from the wrath to come; tell him of the love of Christ, and the glory of Heaven; alas! he has no heart to weigh these representations;—he can see things that are near; he can see and magnify the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of the world; but he depreciates Christ, and the great things of the Gospel, as some would depreciate the glory of the sun, and, for the same reason, because they are very far off. But "in thy light they shall see light." Faith is the evidence of things not seen; it pierces through the interposing heavens, and sees him that is invisible; it represents the grace of Christ by an inexpressible kind of evidence, and thus "works by love," awakens desire, and wins the soul to the obedience of Christ. When a man is enabled with spiritual discernment to see these glorious objects, he feels a firm persuasion of the reality of them, and of their sufficiency; he can believe there is grace in the heart of such a Saviour, that there is merit enough in such a Sacrifice, that there is light and warmth in so glorious a Sun, and truth in such a God. Charmed, as well as persuaded of the excellence and sufficiency of these things, his very heart embraces them, his soul stretches its arms abroad, and cries, "My Lord and my God!" "Whom have I in Heaven but thee?" &c. Then, his practical conversation demonstrates the reality and the divinity of his faith; he confesseth himself a stranger and pilgrim on the earth; his soul no longer

cleaves to the dust; "his treasure is in heaven," and there his heart is also: as he has received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he walks in him: His Name is as ointment poured forth; and, constrained by love to him, he is prepared alike for service or suffering. His faith purifies the heart and overcomes the world. And how pleasant and encouraging is it to behold the stedfastness with which the people of God have held their faith! The life they lived was by faith. By faith in the blood of Christ, in opposition to the works of the law, New-Testament believers have sought their justification; and hence their sanctification and consolation. They have lived by faith, in opposition to sense. The happiness they chose lay above the world, and beyond it: their conversation was in heaven: they loved the Word of God as their food, and their feast, and their treasure; they loved the people of God, because they loved Christ, and were led by his Spirit; and they loved ordinances, because in them they could sometimes get a glimpse of heaven; and to crown all, they died in the faith. They had nothing to fear in death, nothing from sin, nothing from Satan, for body or soul. They had much to hope for beyond death: they had a faithful promise, from the Lord of life and death, of life and glory that should never end; and his rod, and his staff, that had sustained and directed them so often and so long, now afforded them peculiar support. Under these circumstances, they could loose from earth, in

cheerful confidence of gaining the end of their faith, the heaven of everlasting rest. How sweetly did they speak to surrounding friends, of "the Angel that redeemed them from all evil!" "I die, but God will be with you;" and then said, with a soul filled with the peace of God that passeth all understanding, "Into thine hands I commit my spirit." Precious faith! my very soul congratulates my dear children who "have obtained like precious faith." "Lord, increase our faith." What happiness when it shall be lost in vision! May this bear your hearts above the world, and sustain you under every burden!

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER IX.

TO MASTER B——.

Tooting, Dec. 22, 1808.

MY DEAR GRANDSON,

I OFTEN think of you with tender affection, and of your dear brother; and you may suppose that I felt an increasing solicitude, when I heard of your late illness, from which I hope you are now recovered. It is an occasion of great satisfaction to me, that Providence has placed you where you are favoured with the most important advantages. In addition to these, I hope you have found it good

for you, to have been received by Him, "who teacheth as never man taught," into his school of affliction. I trust, his design was to awaken your attention, and cause you to think of that which relates to another world more seriously than ever. Probably, he was pleased to show you some of those things more clearly than you had ever seen them. You were struck with a conviction of the uncertainty of life, and the value of time: perhaps you had a more painful sense of the hatefulness of sin, and the desperate wickedness of your heart, than ever: you gazed at the "evil and bitter thing" till you were ashamed and confounded, and could not help groaning out a desire, that God would wash you thoroughly from your iniquity, and cleanse you from your sin: and I hope that whatever you had before thought of *the world*—what it could be to you or do for you—your mind was then diverted and entirely withdrawn from it, by something you saw, beyond whatever you had before seen, of the grace and preciousness of Christ, and the gracious manner in which he invites a sinful creature, and even a sinful child, to himself. I hope, you often recollect the thoughts and anxieties which then passed through your mind; that you feel a greater concern for your salvation than ever you did before; that you read the Bible and good books more; that you pray more, and are become more inward and spiritual in prayer, and watch your heart more in the performance of the duty. I mention

these things, because I know that your heart, like mine, " is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and that however thoughtful you may be sometimes, and however great your advantages, you are still in danger of losing what you have gained, and of becoming as thoughtless and trifling as ever. I wish you to be afraid of your own heart; to be sensible that it must be renewed; to come to the Lord Jesus, and lament before him how false it is, and how full of sin, and earnestly beg of him, that he would " create within you a clean heart." I am encouraged to urge these things upon you, because of his own promise. (Ezek. xxxvi. 25.) It is one of the great promises, contained in the covenant, which was sealed in your baptism. Your dear parents then pleaded this promise on your behalf; and on the ground of it, affectionately and believingly gave you up to God. For God most graciously encouraged them to " cast you upon him from the womb." He made them " hope concerning you," when you hung on your " mother's breast." And, if you can but cry unto him, " My Father, thou art the guide of my youth!" and give your heart to him, you may be assured, he will grant you the great blessing, that was represented by the water then shed on you, " the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost:" he will put you among his dear children, and be your Father and your God for ever. My dear child, think seriously of this; think often what advantages you would

then possess in a dying hour, and through all eternity. Speak to your brother about it. Pray to partake of this grace; pray together for it: the Lord will not overlook your prayer, nor withhold his mercy from you. You know it is your mercy to have many praying friends on earth; and which is best of all, you have a praying Friend in heaven, who tenderly loves and cares for young children, and "whom the Father heareth always." Your advantages are very great: the Lord most graciously sought you, and claimed you as soon as you were born; your parents gave you to him, and engaged to train you up for him. And now he waits to be gracious to you: he calls, "My son, give me thy heart." Then, let him hear you say, and from day to day repeat it, "Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

I am, your loving grandfather,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER X.

TO MASTER E—— B——.

Tooting, Oct. 9, 1811.

MY DEAR GRANDSON,

You are young, and I am old. I was once as you are; but the revolution of many years has taught me to regard the things of time and eternity

with more habitual thoughtfulness than your vigorous and juvenile spirit perhaps is capable of. Yet there are seasons, I trust, even in your experience, when the apparent uncertainty of life, and the thought of death, judgment, and eternity, constrain a solemn pause; and then, all that your vain mind has been aspiring after, with "all that earth calls good or great," weighed, in the balance of sound reason, with the favour of God, has appeared light as a feather. But when you thought of the favour of God, perhaps it has appeared so very distant, and separated from you by so many discouraging impediments, that your desire was checked, by a desponding sigh. Nor can I wonder, that (when with attention you read what the Scripture saith of man in his natural state, as a child of sin and of wrath, and when you find in yourself so much disinclination to spiritual duties, such strong propensities to what is evil, and such an impossibility to repress vain and sinful thoughts, even on the most solemn occasions), you should admit a fear, that you shall never gain the blessedness of that man whose God is the Lord. But why indulge a desponding thought? It is true, that all you can possibly do, or suffer, cannot merit your acceptance and forgiveness with God. Were you to presume to appear before him, even in the best adorning of your own duties, without Christ, you must appear as a "child of wrath," with awful stains of unpardoned guilt upon you. Nor is it in your power to change your sinful na-

ture, to cleanse the fountain of your evil propensities, and "direct your heart into the love of God." Perhaps you have sometimes tried, and been obliged to confess, "I cannot do the things that I would." Cherish, my dear grandson, the conviction: let it sink deep into your heart. Let Him who seeth in secret, witness the tremblings of your spirit, the shame and abasement with which you regard the sin of your nature, and the fearful alienation of your heart from God and holiness. God was well pleased, when he saw Ephraim, under such a conviction, in an agony, and heard him say, "I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Such a humble, contrite, broken spirit, notwithstanding all the pain and grief that attends it, is well pleasing to God, and a pledge of eternal mercy and salvation to man. This the publican found, when he had been smiting on his breast, and with anguish of spirit crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Such convictions of sin and of our sinful nature, the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, is sent to produce; and such broken hearts the Lord Jesus is anointed and commissioned to bind up. Indeed, there is enough in the sovereign balm found in the doctrine of Christ crucified, to effect this. From his Cross flows a precious, abundant stream of pardoning mercy; and "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Yea, and his Spirit brings the joyful assu-

rance, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean;" "a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Thus you see, what man would attempt but cannot do, *that* God, in his great mercy, does *for* him. The glory is His, while man with humble gratitude confesses, "Not by the works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." So then you may learn "salvation is of the Lord;" it is entirely his work: and this salvation is in and through Jesus Christ; you cannot be accepted, you cannot be saved from wrath and sin, but in him. God can be pleased with nothing in you, except Christ be in you. But if with faith and love, you can come to "Jesus the Lord," "the Mediator of the new covenant," and "to the blood of sprinkling," you will be joined to the saved of the Lord, and he will put his sanctifying Spirit upon you. When the doors of the Israelites were sprinkled with the blood of the paschal lamb, the Egyptians could detain them no longer; so will you "go forth with joy, and be led forth with praise," if your heart be "sprinkled from an evil conscience, by the blood of Jesus." Then Christ will be to you all you want for time and eternity; and you will be "complete in him."

Let your desire be towards Christ. Seek to know more of him: read, and hear, and converse,

and pray to find this treasure. Be earnest with God, that his Holy Spirit may open your eyes to see his glory; open your ears to hear his voice; open your heart, that, with the dearest affections, you may receive and honour him, as your Saviour and your Lord. Then see to it, that he has your heart, and that you have his Spirit. Prove your interest in him, by the influence his grace has on your temper and life; and let the world see, that you are not less happy in yourself, or pleasant to others, because of the grace of God in you. The Lord make his grace to abound in you, and cause you from a child to know the Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation!

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XI.

TO MASTER B——.

Tooting, Jan. 25, 1809.

MY DEAR GRANDSON,

You have been greatly afflicted, and are now in good measure recovered.—I could not help thinking of you with very tender anxiety, when you hung between life and death. I besought the Lord for you, that of his great mercy he would put you amongst his own dear children, and then, with his fatherly wisdom and love, determine whether to continue your mortal life a little longer, or receive you

at once into his own delightful palace, which is eternal in the heavens. Now, I cannot help thinking of you with a thankful heart, and with cheerful hope, as a child of peculiar mercy. The Lord has brought you down almost to the gates of death, and he has wonderfully revived your dying life, and brought you up again. It is the *hand of the Lord*, my dear, that has done this. It was not by chance that the fever seized on you, and raged so long; it was not the skill of the doctor, and the power of his medicines, that brought you back from the pit of corruption; but it is all the Lord's doing, and he always has some design to answer in what he does. You are now a wonder unto many who had almost given up the expectation of your recovery; and sometimes, perhaps, you look back upon your illness, as the Israelites from the shore of the Red Sea looked back on the awful deeps they had passed, wondering at the deliverance which God had wrought. It therefore concerns you, my dear W——, to inquire, "What design had the blessed God in all this? Why has he so greatly afflicted me, and marvellously restored me?" It is no wonder that any man or child should be afflicted; it is no wonder that you should be afflicted; for, though young, you have sinned against God. I hope you know it, and are grieved when you think of it; and instead of complaining, say in your heart, "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed;" for one sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in the

life that now is and in that which is to come. But God means nothing wrathful in your affliction: it was not anger, but love, that brought this chastening upon you. I do not know how far you have thought of your own heart; but I think, if you take some pains to observe and watch it, you will find that it is very apt to be averse from and to neglect the duty which God requires; very backward to think of God, to learn and read his word, to seek him and pray unto him. Now, my dear, there is no friend like God, or, what is the same thing, like Jesus Christ: none ever did so much for you, or provided so much for you, or promised so much to you. Your dear parents tenderly love you, and care for you: they love you, because God loves you, and puts it into their hearts to love you: but they cannot love you as God loves you. They love and pray for you, and take pains to instruct you in the knowledge of God, that you may fear him and love him, and pray to him, and give your heart to him, and have him for your God and Father for ever: but God loves you, though your sinful heart has naturally nothing in it but what is hateful in his sight, and shews an aversion from him and from every thing he requires. He loved you, and gave his beloved Son to suffer unspeakable agony and death for you; and now he loves you, and has spoken good, great good, concerning you. If you will but hear his voice, and turn away from sin and the world, and all the vanities of childhood and youth, and with a thankful

soul accept of his grace, and call him Father, and love and honour him, and, as far as in you lies, behave towards him as his dear child, he promises that he will be a Father to you; that his mercy shall, through the precious blood of Jesus, pardon all your sins: that his own Spirit shall give you a new heart, such a heart as a child of God should have; a heart capable of knowing and serving him, and bowing before him with some degree of that reverence, and love, and obedience, and humbleness of mind, that becomes a child: he promises to love you, and watch over you, and come to you, and provide for you, and at last take you home to heaven, and exalt you to the honours and joys that belong to a child of God. It is, my dear, a very great and blessed promise: your dear parents have accepted it for you under the great seal of Heaven in your baptism; and they have engaged to do all they can, to instruct you in the knowledge of God, and incline you to receive it with a thankful joyful heart, and give yourself entirely to the Lord. Regard this, my dear, as what God had in view in your affliction: he saw there needed something to engage and fix your wandering mind: and therefore he came in a dark cloud, that you may never forget his coming to you; and the voice from the cloud is this, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Oh, it is great mercy to hear the voice of God, though amidst darkness and death! May you never forget it! May your very soul reply, and that

without ceasing, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee!"

LETTER XII.

TO MR. AND MRS. W. B——.

Tooting, Jan. 2, 1800.

MY DEAR W— AND M—,

ANOTHER year of life's pilgrimage is past, and, blessed be God, he has crowned it with his goodness. It is pleasant to review the multiplied and long-continued expressions of Divine mercy. It is pleasant to commit ourselves, at the commencement of a new year, and under the darkness that veils futurity, into the hands of a covenant God, on the ground of eternal truth, and the encouragement of long-continued experience. What a mercy, what a privilege in this world of vanity, sin, and sorrow, where multitudes are labouring for that which satisfieth not, nay, are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," to have a mind in any degree directed into the love of God, at rest in the Supreme Good, cheered with the aspect of Providence, and animated with the opening prospects of an eternal inheritance among the saints in light! Oh the multitudes who have not found the way of peace! who shall find, even in Jesus, when "he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired of all them that be-

lieve," a swift Witness and a wrathful Judge! Therefore, I pray always for you, my dear children, that God would render you worthy of this calling. Receive this as my new-year's benediction.

Practical religion commences in a call from Heaven. It is an effectual call, because it is of God. It is a call which rescues the sinner from the dominion and the darkness of a sinful state; that separates him from the course of the present world, and inclines him to choose the way of God's precepts, and to follow at his feet, through solitary, rugged, and dangerous paths, to a country that he shall shew him. Oh the discriminating mercy of God! With what admiration should a saved sinner review it! Multitudes never heard, never understood, and therefore, never obeyed, his inviting voice; and they are yet deceived by Satan, enslaved by sin, and heirs of wrath; but "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" and in your way to heaven you are charmed with those sweet accents vibrating on every tender affection of your soul, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee!" God has separated you from your mother's womb, has called you by his grace, and revealed his Son in you. This manifestation of the grace of God has made practical religion your business, your calling, your great concern. And this is a call the most honourable, and the most advantageous. Great honour, my dear children, God put on you when he saved

you, and called you with an *holy* calling; when he made you the partakers of his heavenly gift. Oh, may He give you more fully to know what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; and then, they who take knowledge of you will observe with what earnestness of desire and endeavour you "press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." May it be your happiness to be found more and more evidently and eminently worthy of this calling! But what is it to be thus worthy? It is not, in the common acceptation of the words, to be rich or poor, learned or unlearned, honourable or despised. He is worthy of a *secular* calling, a trade, or profession, or art, a place of trust, or a seat of honour, who clearly understands it, whose ability and integrity, whose skill and diligence, appear conspicuous to every observer; —he is worthy to be employed and encouraged in it; worthy of the advantages and honours connected with it:—in like manner, he is worthy of this calling who is taught of God, and well instructed in the knowledge of it; who accounts his business his pleasure; who earnestly desires, and with unremitting diligence and perseverance seeks, the present and future advantages of it; who is willing to make every sacrifice of ease and indulgence, of worldly interest and reputation, that is incompatible with a proper attention to it; who, with indefatigable zeal, labours and endures hardness in it, and whose heart is prepared to employ all the present gains of it to

the glory of God. This worthiness, you will readily see, admits no claim of merit: it produces, not self-complacency, but an admiring sense and acknowledgment of the grace of God, that wonderful spring from whence it is wholly derived. Oh how many professors of religion appear not to be worthy of this calling! They want the knowledge of it. By study they have attained to some acquaintance with the theory, yet their want of skill is manifest, whenever they would apply themselves to any part of it; nay, and when they attempt to speak, their speech betrays their presumption in assuming a profession for which they have no ability. No wonder that cold indifference and neglect should appear in their conduct; no wonder that difficulties and dangers, and even trifling amusements, should divert their regards, and shew that their inclination is not in agreement with their profession. They appear in a character that truly does not belong to them, and which they are not worthy of. May you, my dear children, ever appear in the character of Christians, and shew, not only on the Sabbath, and in the Sanctuary, but uniformly and at all times, at home and abroad, by your company and conversation, your solicitude and labour, that you are truly engaged in this high and holy calling. The men of this world are wise in their generation, to embrace and to seek every probable opportunity of enlarging their knowledge of trade, or of gaining beneficial information. A man of ingenuity and industry has his calling seldom out of sight; nor

is he often out of his way. Hence his capital swells, his reputation is extended, the sources of his wealth are multiplied, and he classes with the great. May your conversation be in heaven, and may you be skilful and indefatigable in a calling that is transcendently excellent and honourable, beneficial and gainful; and then, when the most skilful and successful worldling shall find his gold become dross, you shall have a hope in death, and take your leave of the world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, and amidst dissolving nature stand in your lot among the wise who shall shine as the light in glory, with your glorified Lord for ever.

I am,

Your affectionate father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XIII.

TO MR. AND MRS. W—— B——.

1790.

MY DEAR W— AND M—,

It would afford me very great satisfaction to be often corresponding with you by letter; for indeed you, and whatever relates to your interest and comfort, lie very near my heart; but regular and unavoidable business, various and pressing, prevent

to beguile the labours of your way, with the songs of Zion, and enjoy much of heaven while in your way to it. I trust we shall at last mingle our joys and our songs together. Oh! how high will be our joys, how loud our songs, when we behold the mercy and truth which have attended us in their *un*veiled glories!—I remain, my dear children, in the closest, dearest bonds,

Your father and friend,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XIV.

TO MR. AND MRS. W—— B——.

January 30, 1797.

MY DEAR W—— AND M——,

I MOST tenderly sympathize with you in the circumstances of the severe trial by which you have been exercised. Sharp, indeed, must have been the conflict. Your pleasing hopes, instead of being realized, after long-continued agonies of suffering, have met with piercing disappointment. Distressful fears have been awakened, and, perhaps, are not yet wholly subsided: but you know *who* has *said*, and that with emotions of sympathy never equalled in merely human breast, "Let not your heart be troubled." Great reason you have doubtless had under this affecting visitation to say, that in the seve-

goodly heritage! What, when compared with *it*, are all the wealth, and pomp, and pleasure of this world? This can afford perfect security and peace, amidst raging storms and tempests; nay, this will controul winds and waves, and cause them to favour our progress towards the desired haven. Eternal truth is established in the heavens, and it will invariably pursue its course, until it has seen all the heirs of promise safely entered into rest. Oh, to feel daily and increasingly, the influence of this promise on our souls; that whatever labours, and griefs, and troubles, may await us below, we may enjoy (as far as the present state will admit), an unclouded sky! And oh, for more of the sweet influence of the *Spirit* of promise! Then our souls would not cleave to the dust, as they often do; we should not faint in the day of adversity; we should not draw near to God with a cold, a lifeless heart, nor return comfortless from precious ordinances: we should "run in the way of God's commandments with great delight:" we should live by faith, and rejoice in hope, though the report of sense should be never so discouraging. My dear children, I rejoice to think that you are not strangers to these precious grounds of strong consolation: they have been long tried, and they are never-failing. May your souls abide on this eternal rock, and be daily refreshed by its plenteous streams! Then you will find your cares lighten, and be kept from the fear of evil; then you will be able

Jesus has called on you to relinquish your expected enjoyment of this dear babe, that he might be immediately with *himself*, where he is, to behold his glory. He wants not the tender offices and the fond endearments of earthly parents. He has found a blessed repose in the bosom of Infinite Love. O! it was mercy. The affection by which nature united and endeared him to you, will constrain even your bleeding hearts to call that dispensation mercy, by which your babe, instead of being placed in this world of sin and sorrow, was caught up into heaven; instead of being suffered even to taste the bitter fruit of sin, was called to know, to enjoy, and sweetly sing, the love of Christ. Take heed, my children, that you do not indulge one unpleasant reflection on this circumstance, or the other, which you apprehend might have been the immediate cause of this event, and of your severe suffering. Rest assured, it is God who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; and he doth *all* things well, because he doth all things that concerns his people in wisdom, in love, and in very faithfulness. There is, therefore, a commanding power in that word to all who know his name, "Be still, and know that I am God!" It is not so much an assertion of sovereign right to do what he will with his creatures, as it is an assurance to his tried people, that his attributes are, like himself, unchanging, because they are infinite. Oh! be it our concern to yield ourselves to God, with-

out one wish to change what he appoints; well pleased with all he does, because he has assured us, that "this is his will concerning us, even our sanctification." We do not expect victory without conflict, or the crown without the cross. We do not expect to see all the mysterious dispensations of Providence unfolded in the present world; but the Word of God is tried, and there is a Rock for our faith to rest upon—a Rock that flows in sweetly refreshing streams; so that "believing, we rejoice." Ere long the books will be opened, and then shall we, with wonder and joy, behold those passages written in the fairest characters of wisdom and love which here are wrapt up and sealed in cloudy darkness. Griefs will then be exchanged for joys; and, with admiring multitudes, we shall cry, "What hath God wrought!"

I am
Your truly sympathising father,
J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XV.

TO MR. AND MRS. W— B—.

MY DEAR W— AND M—,

It is an occasion of pleasure to me to find that God is with you. "Truly, his loving kindness is better than life." How it relieves the cares, the

burdens, and the sorrows of life! How it sweetens its enjoyments, and brightens its prospects! In the short period of your lives, how many expressions of God's loving kindness you may trace! What a kind and constant Friend has he been! How great is his goodness! how cordial his endearments! His dispensations, how full of grace! his promises, what a goodly heritage! Some of his choicest favours have been sent you through the medium of afflictions: amidst the thickest cloud, you have heard the welcome voice of mercy; you have found stormy winds have fulfilled his word, and conveyed to you the promised mercy: you have revered, admired, and rejoiced. Bless God, my dear children, for the instructions these visitations have afforded you. Some humbling lessons, I doubt not, you have learnt; and some discoveries you have made, which revive your gratitude, your love, your zeal, and compel you to cry, "What shall I render to the Lord?" You feel, in some measure, as the Apostle felt, and as he would that all the ransomed of the Lord should feel, when he said, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the *mercies* of God," &c. May you have more and more of this sacred fire glowing in your breasts! It is fire which God's royal priesthood should daily feed; it is fire that should never go out. How happy are we when the incense of prayer is kindled, and every sacrifice we present, is inflamed by it! I rejoice in the work of God, manifested in the places and circumstances you men-

tion. May the Lord be pleased to honour your endeavours to instruct poor perishing sinners in the great things of the Gospel! We here see reason to bless God that he was pleased to put it into our hearts to endeavour to spread the Gospel in the villages through our own county. I have lately visited five of those villages where the Gospel has been introduced, and am greatly encouraged. At W——, there is a family lately called of God, (father, mother, and daughter), who have undertaken the education of the poor children, and of others who are willing to learn to read. I found a great deal of pleasure in addressing these young ones, after the public service. We have reason to rejoice over *some* in every place where we go, who have received the truth in the love of it. The enemy, indeed, has resisted us. We do not expect to find success every where; but the Great Shepherd knows his sheep, and where to search them out. Our joy is, that salvation is God's work; that His is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. May God be with you all, to bless you, and fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, &c.

I am, in dearest affection,

Your father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XVI.

TO MR. AND MRS. W—— B——.

Tooting, August, 1806.

MY DEAR W—— AND M——,

I AM now preparing to accomplish a purpose, long since formed, and in which I seek my own gratification at least equally with yours. I truly rejoice in you, and in the favour which God is pleased to manifest toward you. We have to rejoice too in that mercy that has appeared in the happy recovery of your sisters. Mrs. B—— remains very poorly, not suffering quite the extremity of pain as before; but very weak, still declining, weary of life, but longing rather for release from suffering than to be with Christ; yet I would hope, that, amidst much darkness, she has built upon the Rock. Poor Mrs. W——, if her mind be awake, how false and how vain must the world appear, and what anxiety must her spirit feel! How happy, if the kind Shepherd of Israel should gather the trembling lamb in his arms, lay it up to rest in his bosom, and open its tender mind to a satisfying and saving view of his glory!

These are bitter waters in her dear Father's cup, but bitter waters are often the most salutary. There is a tree that can heal them, nay, and make them pleasant and refreshing. Miss A—— is in similar

circumstances; she enjoys a happy serenity, I hope, on Gospel principles. What a Refuge is Jesus to a genuine believer in life and in death! "A man shall be as a shadow of a great Rock in a weary land." The country in the South, and, I am told, in the North too, has been a weary land; and who has not found the refreshment of a shadow? The pilgrim, the traveller in a desert, has, beyond others, enjoyed the refreshment. How thankfully he shrinks from the burning heavens, and the parched earth, and hastens to rest beneath the inviting Rock! How sweetly he resteth, secretly wishing—but it is a fruitless wish—that this Rock could follow him all the desert through! Alas! what has sin done! What a curse has it brought upon our world; how awful its influence, and how wide its spread! "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain." Our very comforts, nay, our greatest outward comforts, become oppressive and killing; and, besides these, what disappointments and bereavements,—what griefs and burdens of affliction,—what distressful conflicts from in-dwelling sin,—what sore temptations from Satan, and persecutions from an ungodly world,—what hidings of God's face, and impressions of his displeasure!—No wonder it should be called a weary land, and that "the soul of the people" should be at times "discouraged because of the way." Yet all this makes for us, and prepares us to enjoy our mercies with the greater relish. Blessed Jesus! we should not

know what compassion and what sweetness are in thee, if we did not find ourselves in a weary land, toiling and fainting under the burning heavens. But our necessities and burdens drive us to thee; and in thee we find a Rock whose shadow affords effectual and sweet relief from all the evil there is in the world, and in ourselves. It is a beautiful figure! Christ is a *Rock*,—immutable and beneficial. On that Rock may my faith rest; may my house, my interest, and my salvation, be built! and then I may smile at gathering clouds, and fear no evil from rains, or storms, or floods. An inhabitant of that Rock I would daily be; and to the clefts of that Rock, with the trembling dove, I would flee when tempests rage! Happy Israelites! what relief did they find in a weary land. When they all drank of that spiritual Rock, their peace was like a river, a river in a sandy, sultry desert, and yet undiminished. Precious Saviour! "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Myriads have here been refreshed, and it is yet abundant! My soul adores the mercy that enables me to say, "Of his fulness have we received, and grace for grace!" Unhappy multitudes! who say to the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of this world, "Ye are our gods." Let me rather be classed with the fatherless, who find mercy in him. Yea, let me account all things but loss, and reject them "as dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him." Unhappy men! when the day of the Lord cometh,

they will in consternation cry, "Is there not a lie in our right hand?" will cast away their idols to the moles and to the bats, and go into the clefts of the rock; nay, and cry to the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Miserable creatures! Nature has no rocks that can extinguish their being, or shelter them from the wrathful storm, or deliver them from the horror with which they shall eternally behold this spiritual Rock falling upon them, as if it would grind them to powder. Happy believer! to whom Jesus is a "Rock of Salvation." In how many respects he finds him precious! "I sat under his shadow with great delight," sweetly relieved from the burden of guilt and wrath. And how is a Saviour endeared to me when I think, whence is this benefit, and how comes it to pass that he affords me a shadow and a rest so refreshing! Wondrous truth! wondrous grace! My Surety undertook my cause, and bore the full vengeance due to my transgressions. Joyful assurance! he was able to bear it. "Ascribe ye greatness to our God; he is the Rock; his work is perfect." God manifested in the flesh, redeemed the Church *with his own blood.* He was made a curse for us; and now there is no more death, no more evil, no more condemnation; there is full security's sweetly refreshing shadow, to them who are in Christ Jesus. In his Name, repentance and remission of sins are preached; and myriads of saved sinners on earth and in heaven, being justified by faith, have

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. How many a trembling conscience has here been relieved from overwhelming distress, when the wrath of God was abiding upon him! And how many of God's own dear children have found a sanctuary here, when they were saying, "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer!" In how many seasons of grievous temptation, or outward distress and trouble, and cruel persecution have they found sweet refreshment beneath this Rock. "Death cannot make our souls afraid, if Christ be with us there." Nay, and amidst the wreck of nature, and the tremendous glories of the last day, this will enable us to lift up our heads with composure and joy. Oh! that the admirers of the world, and they who trust in themselves that they are righteous, could see the transcendent excellency and preciousness of Christ! What can we do for ourselves, or what can the whole creation do for us, compared with what believers find in this Rock. This, then, it is, that constitutes a Christian. It is coming to this Rock, and truly seeking salvation in Jesus. But who are they who come? Rarely they who enjoy pleasant and plentiful circumstances in the world: not they who are hardened in sin, and have no alarming sense of wrath, or who can satisfy an awakened conscience with promises of amendment, but they who have outward trouble and soul trouble; who tremble before God, and find there

is no help in themselves. To such weary souls, in a weary land, rest will be sweet—Christ will be precious. Blessed troubles! that compel the soul to seek refreshment here. Glorious Redeemer! how abundant thy sufficiency, and how rich thy grace, who art so freely, so sweetly inviting sinners of every description under thy shadow! What multitudes are already gathered! how every heart and every tongue unites in saying, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God!" "And yet there is room." "Salvation in abundance flows like floods of milk and wine." Who can estimate the present and future happiness of the man who abides under this shadow? And who can describe the misery of him who shall be found out of Christ? for "behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven," &c. the overflowing scourge that shall sweep away the refuges of lies. May it be your happiness, my dear children, and mine, in that day, to be found in Christ! The blessing of God be with you!

I remain, with truest affection, dear children,

Your father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XVII.

TO MR. AND MRS. W—— B——.

Tooting, Feb. 1803.

MY DEAR W— AND M—,

YOUR letter of the 5th instant gave us much pleasure, and awakened sentiments of gratitude. Blessed be God! whose everlasting mercy blotteth out the cloud of affliction, and sweetly says, "Your sins will I remember against you no more!" My dear W——'s partial recovery, I hope, if consistent with God's wise and gracious and holy will, we shall soon hear is perfected. But, ah! the uncertainty of life, the precarious nature of health, and our dearest connections here!—how proper, how profitable, how good is it to be dying daily, to be trimming our lamps, (that is, cleaning and enlivening them, and providing them a fresh supply of oil);—to be laying up treasure in Heaven; that is, making sure our interest in the infinite treasure already laid there, and, by active piety and the fruits of faith, providing for an abundant recompense of reward! How can we contemplate, but with grateful wonder, the condescension of the Most High God, in suffering himself to be represented as a debtor to sinful dust and worms! "God is not *unrighteous* to forget your work of faith and labour of

love," &c. It is his own grace, his promise, and the blood of his own Son, that is the only ground of our claim; yet, when he dispenses everlasting good, and ushers the hell-deserving sinner into all the joys and glories of heaven, he proclaims himself his debtor. Who, that knows the grace of God, but must be his ready servant? His "yoke is easy;" and why should not we be reconciled to all his will? In infinite grace it consults our good; it means our sanctification. Truly, my dear W——, I rejoice to find your mind pacified and satisfied by this consideration in affliction. Indeed, it is the part of wisdom to submit to nauseous medicines and painful operations, in order to be delivered from threatening disease. That is a friendly hand, whatever suffering it unavoidably occasion, that undertakes to pluck the viper from our breasts that has already infused its venom into our blood, has often made the wound to bleed afresh, and is still aiming at our life. Oh! let me welcome the suffering by which my Saviour bids me hope for such a deliverance: let me not tremble at the sight of the furnace wherein I am to be melted and tried, while He, whose skill, and compassion, and love, are abundantly proved and attested, promises to sit by, and secure the precious gold, and cause the trial to be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Truly, that dear Friend, with all the bitterness of affliction he has allotted me, has mingled so much kind-

ness and sweetness in the cup, that it were inexcusable folly and base ingratitude to resist his will. His gifts, his promises, and many of his dealings with me, proclaim with united and powerful energy, "God is love." His conduct, his word, his heart, is love; love itself; pure, unmingled love: the sweet answer to that great question, "What is God?" Yes, it will be the business of eternity to explore the unbounded glories of this wondrous name; to trace the manifestation which God has been pleased to make of this delightful character—this brightest star in the constellation of the Divine attributes—this principal wheel in the machine of Providence, that sets all the rest in motion, "working all things after the counsel of his own will." Had it pleased the Most High to have consigned to me the mightiest monarchy on earth, and to have guaranteed the peaceable possession of it to me for an hundred years, and to my posterity for a thousand generations, in the regards of the world this had been enviable greatness. Yet, how *deficient!* The carnal mind would have been elated, and for a while gratified; but herein would have been no rest for an immortal soul. What a mere shadow, what a nothing is this, when compared with the good pleasure of his goodness which his word reveals, and which his Providence and his Spirit, with an energy that no power can resist, are fulfilling, and will fulfil in us! What is this to the unspeakable gift of his

love; the adoption and the inheritance of sons; the image of his holiness; the treasure that faith embraces? Well is it said, "We that believe do enter into rest;" for "this is the promise that he hath promised us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Herein is a good adequate to the largest desire of an immortal mind. It comprehends whatever its sin and misery have made necessary. O! to live under the impression of this love!—to feel it so as to be dissolved, and cast into a new mould by it! While its influence prevails, how easy the yoke of service or suffering! how sweet, how powerful, its constraint! It is the mighty, and, indeed, the only conqueror of the heart of man. It prevails where the severest judgments, and all the terrors of the law, had been tried in vain. I do not wonder, my dear W——, that, thus constrained, you should feel a ready mind when duty seems to call; yet when Providence is pleased to permit a restraint by bodily frailty, as of old by persecuting fury, however hard it be to bear, (and in many instances it was the severest trial of silenced ministers), it becomes a duty to yield, "humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God." I pray God to confirm your health, and to prolong your usefulness. I rejoice to hear of your Missionary success. We have much to be thankful for in that respect.

I am, my dear children,

very affectionately, your father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XVIII.

TO MR. AND MRS. W—— B——,

Tooting, June 17, 1805.

MY DEAR W— AND M—,

YOUR letter of the 29th ult. produced very lively sensations of both pain and pleasure. We cannot help bearing a part very feelingly in your afflic—on, and being very solicitous about your recovery. However, "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."—— Salvation! how great a blessing, great beyond all our conception.—What a crown and joy await the saved sinner! What a mercy is it to be able to trace the beginning and pledge of it. But what works of salvation are yet to be wrought in us; what grace and blessings yet to be received!—"Wonders of grace to God belong." When he proclaims his name, and grants a manifestation of his glorious majesty, power, and goodness, there is a voice which breaks from the Excellent Glory, saying, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." When we hear him speak in exceeding great and precious promises, and are persuaded of them, we can let every thing drop to embrace them eagerly crying, "This is all my salvation; this is all my desire." When he is pleased to open a page in the book of Providence, and to reveal his superior well-directed, and never-failing measures, we can

chide our anxious spirits, and mourning complaints: we cry, "It is the Lord, let him do unto me as seemeth good unto him." "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." Happy is such a frame! It is good for me—it is fit—it becomes a creature mean and vile, a sinner guilty and wretched. Salvation in any way, at any time, will be mercy indeed to such a one. How becoming is it to a believer who has taken God's word as his heritage for ever, and confessed himself a pilgrim and stranger on the earth, and what a present recompence of inward peace it brings with it; and, which is beyond every other consideration, what glory this unshaken hope, this patient, quiet expectation brings to God! Yet God works by means—let me trust in the Lord, and do good—let me in my expectations from him be, not slumbering nor slothful, but active and industrious—let no means within my power be neglected; let me plough and sow; let me stretch the sails, and wait till he be pleased to send forth the wind that brings and works salvation:—and, if his measures cross my sensual inclinations; if he do not grant what I would have, or when I would have it; if he take away what I would have spared, let me listen whether his Spirit whisper no complaint against me;—whether conscience will not say, It is fit, it is good, that such a worm as I, rescued by a miracle of mercy from the wrath to come, should both hope and quietly wait. It is a fit, a becoming, a beneficial temper; yet how rare, even among Christians, and

how difficult! But why difficult? Because we are ever setting an undue value on creature comforts. We idolize them: we rest in them, instead of rising to God by them: we bind them to our hearts; therefore the separation wounds us to agony. Another reason is: we are angry with the instrument, and overlook the Hand that directed it, not being apprised that the Lord had bidden Shimei to curse David, or dispatched this disease or blasting providence as a messenger of his sovereign will to us. Sometimes we are looking with undue expectation to creature-remedies and means of relief; nay, we become atheistical in the use of them, and forget that no Bethesda can heal until the Spirit of the Lord be revealed, and then no further than he pleases. And, alas! how prone are we to consult with flesh and blood, and to be more solicitous to tread a smooth and flowery path, than to be led in the right though rugged way to heaven. My dear children, I could enlarge very pleasantly, and beyond the limits of a letter, in representing to you those views of God which are calculated very sweetly to relieve the difficulty and cause the mind "both to hope and quietly wait." What reverence is due to the sovereignty of God! Arise, my soul, and go down to the *potter's house*, and learn subjection to the will of God. This would be to destroy the Jonah within us that raises many a storm. How it silences man, to contemplate the righteousness of God! "Just and true are all thy ways, O Lord." But let us search and try our own. The

faithfulness of God,—what a resting-place is that!—"I know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me!" The holiness and spotless purity of God, rightly considered, will cause us to be afraid of any risings of corruption under affliction. The almighty power of God, how it carries the mind above improbabilities, and helps it to hope even against hope! The unsearchable and infinite wisdom of God, who cannot err in the measure or continuance of affliction, and who knows both how to deliver from it and how to bring good out of it;—the infinite goodness, the love, and mercy of God, who appoints the furnace, sits by it, and secures to the soul advantage from it;—and, above all, the boundless all-sufficiency of God to repair every loss, and be a fountain of pure, sublime, and eternal delight: these are hints for your improvement. The beams of this various glory of the Lord, let into the soul, will clear the vale of suffering, and give songs in the night. We cannot wonder that you sigh in solitude, and lament when you remember Zion. But what mercy it is, that constrained distance from the house of God is no separation from the God of the house! He is the God of consolation, and can shine through other mediums—can open rivers in high places, and springs in the valleys. I bless God, he leads you by the springs of water, though in the wilderness of affliction; and provides you an anchor of hope amidst stormy trials. Glorious hope, which his covenant promise inspires! What may not be expected from infinite Love!

How reviving its beams, even in this dark and distant world! Well might Luther say, "Lord, forgive my sin, and strike me where thou wilt: even a cloud brings a message of love and a shower of blessings." Yet may it please the Lord of health to bless the means you are trying. Truly the Lord is good, and he will shew us more and more of his mercy. My very soul doth magnify the Lord when I think of dear R——, and the hand of the Lord working in him and by him.

I am, my dear children, affectionately
Your Father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XIX.

TO MR. R—— B——.

Sept. 15, 1793.

MY DEAR R——,

THE account you have given us of your safe arrival at N——, your welcome reception, and prospects of comfort, affords us pleasure. I am happy to hear that you have found a few among your fellow-students who have the same serious views of religion and the Gospel ministry that you have, and the same apprehensions of Gospel truth. I trust you will be enabled to strengthen each other's hands under every discouragement, and regard it as

your duty affectionately to consider each other to provoke to love and to good works. Mr. H— will, undoubtedly, give you all the countenance he can without incurring the charge of partiality; and you will soon find yourselves kindly noticed by the serious part of the congregation: but, beyond every other encouragement, you may assure yourself, while you hold fast your profession, and are actuated by the fear and love of God, you will have a Patron in heaven, in whose smiles you will find an abundant recompence: "the Lord is with you while you are with him." You will not fail, I hope, to be assiduous in your application to those branches of learning in which you are engaged. It were a pity that those who differ from you in their views of the Gospel, should outshine you in their literary acquirements. But with all your getting, get understanding; study the Scripture; and study your own heart. Compare those books together, and you will find the remedy as powerful as the disease, and admirably adapted to it. Study the Cross of Christ, and you will see more and more reason to cleave to it, and to rejoice and glory in it. Indeed, if there be not redemption in the blood of Christ for guilty sinners, we are yet without hope: if this truth be not contained in revelation, there is nothing there which deserves the name of Gospel. But, blessed be God, there are a happy few who have found this pearl of great price in this sacred field, and found it a soul-enriching treasure. Nor are the saints in heaven governed by a mis-

taken zeal while they tune their golden harps to the praises of Him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. I hope, my dear boy, you will study to recommend yourself in all your connections by a humble, kind, and obliging carriage, and especially let your behaviour to your tutor ever be respectful: ever consider him as your truest friend; and may the best of friends be with you and bless you!

I am, my dear R——,

Your affectionate Father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XX.

TO MR. R——. B——.

Tooting, Feb. 28, 1794.

MY DEAR R—,

THE account you gave us, in your last, of the fire at N— was very awful and affecting. How much are we indebted to a watchful and merciful Providence for that exemption from many temporal evils with which we are distinguished; and especially for that eternal deliverance from eternal evil which, I trust, we have to rejoice in through Jesus Christ! "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The blood of Jesus, the true Pascal Lamb, sprinkled by faith on the heart, is a full security against the approach of all real evil; and

the covenant of God's glorious grace is a sure foundation of real good: for this covenant constitutes every believer in Christ a child of God, and places him immediately under his kind superintendance as an infinitely tender parent, and an all-sufficient God. This real interest is therefore eternally secure, and must be in the wisest and best manner promoted. "He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, and abideth under the shadow of the Almighty." You speak, my dear boy, of the use and abuse of the promises. They have undoubtedly, as you observe, been misapplied and perverted in many cases: they are children's meat, and no stranger may intermeddle with the joy they are intended to inspire: they are the heavenly manna sent down to supply the daily wants of God's pilgrim people: they are sweet as honey and the honey-comb to every true Israelite, and wisely adapted to all the circumstances of his present state: they afford milk for babes, and strong meat for strong men: they are a rich treasury of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, of counsel, and comfort, and strength, and quickening energy, and of whatever the Christian can need. For the Lord knows our frame: he had a perfect foresight of it from all eternity; and in the purpose and provision of his grace, he had respect to all the infirmities and wants of every kind with which his children would in after-ages be encompassed. This purpose and provision, this covenant with all its precious promises, is represented to us under the beautiful image of a

river clear as chrystal, proceeding from the Throne of God and of the Lamb. The streams of this river, flowing in ten thousand directions, make glad the city of our God: they visit every family of God's Israel, and are found as a well of living water springing up in every heart. Precious streams! they afford the richest delight, and are followed by no remorse. They satisfy, but do not cloy. They sometimes have found their way into the stately palaces of the great, but more usually they bless the cottages of the needy poor, and ever beautify the meek with salvation.—Two things are requisite, to justify our humble claim to the grace of the promises. The first is this: we must have reason on scriptural ground to conclude that we are the seed of Abraham and the children of God. "If we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." But I have no authority to say, "I am Christ's," unless my temper and conduct make it appear that I am no longer the servant of sin, the willing slave of corruption; and that I have practically chosen the way of the Divine precepts. I have no just reason to say that I am Christ's, unless I can find in me that humiliation and poverty of spirit, that prevailing bias towards the Gospel covenant, which will make it appear that I am no longer under the law but under grace; and as a sinner, self-condemned and without strength, have fled for refuge to lay hold on the glorious Hope which the Gospel sets before me. Nor

have I any just reason to say I am Christ's, unless it be manifest from the heaven-aspiring bent of my soul, that I am not of the world, but chosen out of it, and prevailingly seeking those things which are above: and I may add, if I am Christ's, I must doubtless think affectionately, and gratefully, and honourably, and highly of him. He will be precious unto me as he is unto them that believe; I shall delight in the mention and memory of his name, and be actuated with a becoming zeal for his glory: I shall love all them who love him, and who bear his image: I shall rejoice in the growth of his kingdom, and devoutly pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. Let it be your concern, my dear R—, and mine, to make good our claim to the promises on such grounds as these; and then, while they who mind earthly things think lightly of them, we shall call them the joy and rejoicing of our heart: while the iniquitous person and the enthusiast deceive their own souls by a misapplication of them, we shall, by faith, live upon them, and in sweet experience know the good of God's chosen. The other thing requisite to justify our claim to the promises is: a careful improvement of the light and strength we have. "Trust in the Lord and do good," is the counsel of Heaven; and, indeed, then only have we reason to expect the Divine blessing in a renewed communication of his grace, when we are using the means, employing the ability, and walking by the light we already have. If we are found transgressing

the rules of duty, or remiss in our regards to them, no wonder if we find ourselves in the sad state of Sampson, when he arose to shake himself as at other times, and wist not that the Lord was departed from him. Our Lord has made it our duty, not only to believe, but also to watch and to pray, that we enter not into temptation. Oh, my dear R—, the more you are acquainted with the corruptions of the heart, the snares of the world, and the devices of Satan, the more occasion you will find for a serious and daily attention to this kind and important admonition. Oh, be it your concern to converse much with God and your heart in secret, and that will be the happy means of keeping your soul alive in its opposition to sin, and of defeating the cruel designs of an ever-watchful and crafty foe, who has long been practised in the arts of deceiving precious souls.

I am, my dear R—,

very affectionately your father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXI.

TO MR. R— B—.

April 4, 1794.

MY DEAR R—,

I AM glad to find you often think with pleasure and inward delight of the Gospel-scheme, and the

display of God's essential perfections therein. It is indeed a grand, a delightful, and a profitable subject of meditation. The blessed angels themselves regard it as such, though not interested in its consequences as we are. It is for *us*, that the doctrine of the Cross proclaims "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:" it is for *our* security it reveals a sanctuary, stronger than a munition of rocks: it is for *our* never-failing joy and delight, it shews the fulness of Christ flowing in an abundant river. Well may we therefore, with grateful and lively joy, contemplate its glories. If we get to heaven, we shall survey them with minds more enlarged, our apprehensions will be more adequate and just, and our songs more lively. How will our hearts burn within us, when Jesus himself, in the language of heaven, shall explain to us these mysteries, and tell of his own love! Surely we shall then feel, though in a far nobler sense, what Jonathan felt, while listening to the artless but animated discourse of David: it is said, "when David had made an end of speaking, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." I would have you, however, my dear R—, be cautious how you listen to discourses which are calculated to lead you to overlook the inflexible justice of God, and to regard only his benevolence and love. It is true, we are not to regard (as you observe) the Deity as a wrathful malignant being: no, he is perfectly amiable and lovely: but

remember, justice is an attribute of Deity, as well as mercy. Had it been possible that the great Lawgiver and Governor of the world could have noticed sin in his creatures without infinite hatred, or passed it by without inflicting its just and full desert, he had never provided such a surety and substitute for us: he had never chosen his own Son to bear our sins; much less had it "pleased the Lord to bruise him." The very beauty of the Lord is his holiness, and that consists in the harmony of all his moral perfections; and no where does this harmony appear so conspicuous as in the Cross of Christ. In that grand contrivance of Infinite Wisdom, the awful glories of justice appear not to lessen, but to heighten and exalt, the glory of the whole; and while profane sinners and unbelievers will not, or rather dare not, behold the majesty of the Lord, the ransomed throng will have to exult for ever in "a just God and a Saviour." You speak of my proposing to you now and then a subject on which you may write your thoughts and exercise yourself in composition. I think, my dear, the motion is a good one, and you may find advantage from it. I would not wish, however, as yet to exercise you on controversial subjects, as you have not yet entered on divinity studies: something of a practical nature, and especially experimental, you will find more useful. Suppose you ground your first essay on Matt. xxvii. 36.: "and sitting down, they watched him there." The reference, you will presently see, is particularly to the centurion and the

Roman soldiers, who were stationed round the cross to see that the sentence of death was fully executed, and to prevent any interference of his friends to rescue him. They seem to have been (at first, at least) very ignorant and heedless spectators of this solemn scene; so was the multitude; and the disciples themselves had no just apprehension of this astonishing event. But what I wish of you, is, to represent a believer in Christ as sitting at the foot of the cross, in the light of the Gospel, contemplating its wonders, and in a devout soliloquy expressing the sentiments and reflections of his mind, while beholding that amazing spectacle; and while you write to improve yourself in composition, be sure you apply the truths that strike your imagination to your heart.—I am, my dear R—, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXII.

TO MR. R—— B——.

Sept. 8, 1794.

MY DEAR R—,

I RECEIVED yours with pleasure. May the Lord sanctify all your studies, and enrich you more and more with the knowledge of himself and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent! There is nothing that affords entertainment and delight to a mind enlightened by the Spirit of God, like the excel-

lency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. There is nothing like it, to prevail against the rooted vices of the mind, and form the heart to a divine and holy temper. The lecture that you speak of, upon *Habit*, was, I conclude, a good one, as a discourse on a moral subject, and merely on natural principles; but take care that you are not, by discourses of this nature, led to overlook the grand principles on which the system of Christian morality is built. Habit, my dear child, I am ready to allow, has great influence. It has done much for us, who have enjoyed the advantage of a religious education. It restrains the various propensities of the mind, enfeebles the force of temptation, and renders the practice of virtue in external conversation more easy, and sometimes even pleasant. All this it may do, and yet, after all, leave the soul far, very far, from the kingdom of God. It has often produced pride, self-complacency, and self-confidence; but never, in one instance, did it produce that meek and lowly, that humble and contrite, spirit to which the promises of salvation are so often annexed. It has often fixed a poor misguided sinner on the wretched foundation of the broken covenant of works; but never did it constrain any one to fly for refuge to that glorious Hope which the Gospel has set before us in the covenant of grace. It has often produced a fair outside shew of godliness; but never did it prove effectual to direct the heart into the love of God, and to produce those affections and actings

wherein especially consists the life of God in the soul. It has confirmed many a one in principles directly opposite to those of the Gospel; but never did it lead one soul to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and to know the truth as it is in Jesus. There is an essential difference between nature and grace;—as real and as great a difference as between light and darkness, life and death. Nature's obedience is at best formal and cold: it wants that enlivening principle, the love of Christ, which warms the Christian's heart, and the Spirit of Christ, that well of living water which never fails. It is not without reason that the Apostle observes, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and again, "if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*." It was not without reason that our Lord gave his disciples the promise of the Spirit as a sanctifier and comforter, and that he prayed for them, saying, "Father, sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Nor was it without reason that the same blessed Teacher told the Scribes and Pharisees, while they were going about to establish their own righteousness, that "publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before them." We live in a day wherein the religion of nature is much recommended, under the specious name of Christianity; but their principles are directly repugnant the one to the other. Nature *ineffectually* labours to obtain acceptance by her

performances; while grace in the Christian's heart constrains him to serve and honour that blessed Redeemer in whom he knows he is accepted. The glory of Christianity will never be seen, nor can its rich advantages be enjoyed, until a conviction is communicated, and a persuasion entertained, that we are ready to perish, that we are without strength, and that none but Christ can deliver us. Until then, the Gospel is foolishness to every mind; but when thus spiritually and divinely impressed, it becomes at once "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." The more, my dear R—, you are conversant with the Christian world, and with professors in it, the more you will see that where the doctrine of man's condemnation and helplessness is not faithfully inculcated, and the necessity and sufficiency of a Saviour's sacrifice is not clearly exhibited, (doctrines which were so fully maintained by the divines of the last century, whose names will be ever precious in the sight of God, and which were the support and joy of every martyr at the stake;—wherever, I say, these primary truths are not scripturally and perseveringly unfolded), all real religion is at a stand. The form may be preserved; but as to spiritual sensibility, it is all stagnant and dead; and the professor, who occasionally may name the name of Christ, is habitually borne down by the errors and vices that surround him. May the Lord keep you and me from every degree of error, and

teach us to exemplify more fully in our daily conversation the truth as it is in Jesus!

I am, my dear R—, yours, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXIII.

TO MR. R—— B——.

Dec. 22, 1794.

MY DEAR R—,

I SUPPOSE you have before this time finished your investigation of the doctrine of liberty and necessity; and I can easily suppose that you have learnt that there are among the things of God some that we may look into, but which we cannot find out. We may reason upon them, we may draw certain conclusions relating to them from premises which are fully established by the word of God; but when the wisest of men have attempted particular explanation, they have done little but darken counsel without understanding. Thus much we can with confidence say, that we and all mankind, as to all holy and acceptable obedience, are of ourselves and in our natural state without strength: that whatever is evil in us, is from ourselves; whatever is truly good, either in disposition or practice, is of God: that it is impossible that we, by the exertions of our utmost endeavours, and the most

careful improvement of our highest advantages, should establish a righteousness of our own for justification: that the noblest spring of obedience, and that which only can sanctify the gifts we present to God, and render them acceptable, is faith in a dying Saviour, which worketh by love. It is equally certain, that in whatever soil this heavenly plant is found, it will be productive, more or less, of good fruits, holy and heavenly. In whatever hearts this and other Divine principles are found, the hand of God must be confessed. It is He that saves us and calls us with a holy calling; and salvation is entirely his own work: yet it is manifest, that, in effecting this change in our hearts, he is pleased to draw us with the cords of a man, and to make use of means and motives;—of such arguments of terror and of love, as are most likely to produce the desired effect in rational creatures. It is certain, that if the heart of the prodigal resist these calls from Heaven; if the hardened rebel refuse the mercy of his Prince, with so much affectionate importunity offered him; if the man of the world, the slave of vile affections and lusts, turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven, and say, "We have loved our idols, and after them will we go;" he must bring redoubled guilt and wrath upon his head: and yet it is as fully declared in the word of God, that it is the sovereign grace of God that chooses from among the children of men a people for his praise; that it is his almighty power that forms them for himself, creates

them anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, and directs their hearts into his love. These propositions are fully supported by the Scripture; but if we would enter into explanation, and attempt to answer such inquiries as these;—"what was there in the converted sinner, but the grace of God, which determined the happy issue of the means of conversion in his experience;—or, what was it in the unbelieving sinner, but the *want* of that *grace* which occasioned the dreadful triumph of the evil heart over the means of conversion?" we shall find ourselves involved in a labyrinth of difficulties, which, if we are truly wise, I think we shall leave to the light of heaven and glory to explain. My dear R—, my wish concerning you is, that, while searching into the writings of Divine grace, you would make the word of God the man of your counsel. Study the sacred Scriptures with application: bring home the sacred truths you find there, and compare them with what you find in your own heart: that knowledge which arises from experience, or is confirmed by it, will be productive of the happiest effects. When doubts and difficulties arise in your mind, let your heart bow before God, and say, "What I know not, teach thou me." Cultivate an habitual reverence of God: be afraid of every temptation to remissness or formality in those duties which are the appointed means of promoting the life of God in the soul: and if it be the will of God to spare your life, and put you into the ministry, you

will then come forth as one who is not only improved by study, and taught of men, but especially improved by experience, and taught of God.

I am, my dear R—, yours, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXIV.

TO MR. R—— B——.

Feb. 19, 1795.

MY DEAR R—,

It gives me pleasure to find you look forward to the work of the ministry with so much solemnity of spirit. It is, indeed, of all employments the most arduous. Your own everlasting interest will be deeply involved in the fidelity and diligence with which you discharge its important functions; while the eternal state of many will depend on the regard they pay to the Gospel you deliver. Under the impression of such reflections as these, we need not wonder that you receive the sacred commission with a trembling hand, and with the great Apostle exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Shall I mention a few thoughts, calculated to direct your inquiries, and satisfy your mind, as to the reality of your call to the discharge of the duties appertaining to the ministerial office? First, then, Whom God commissions, he instructs.—It is requisite that

an ambassador, who is charged by his sovereign with an important commission to any court or people, should not only be a man of ability, and well versed in general politics, but that he should be fully acquainted with the particular business he has to transact: otherwise he may do essential injury to the cause in which he is engaged. Now, what that Gospel is which the ministers of Christ are commissioned to preach, that treaty which they are sent to negociate, I could not wish to have more clearly and fully stated than it is in the writings of the New Testament, in conjunction with those of the Old, especially in the writings of the Apostle Paul. When that eminent servant of the Lord Jesus gives a summary of it, it is in this plain and unequivocal language: "That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation; for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In his Epistle to the Romans he fully, and in the most explicit language, treats of the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity, together with all the awful effects thereby produced: the whole is beautifully summed up in that charming passage (more precious to a truly convinced and believing sinner than thousands of gold and silver), "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they who receive *abundance* of *grace*, and of the

gift of *righteousness*, shall reign in life by *one* Jesus Christ." This is glorious Gospel indeed! This has been the blessed support and the joy of a ransomed army of martyrs, in the gloomy prison, and amidst the devouring flames. This has been the power of God unto the salvation of a multitude which no man can number, and will continue to manifest its uncontroulable efficacy to the end of the world. This is the bread of life, and the water of life, by which the Israel of God are to this day maintained in the wilderness; and this is and will be for ever the burden of their song in heaven. This is the wisdom of God in a mystery. The highest archangel becomes a student here, and, with the Apostle Paul, is transported with the high Discoveries it reveals. Oh! that our modern Dissenters appeared to feel like him their import and their excellency, and were heard to exclaim, with apostolic fervour, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!" But how manifest, how extreme the difference! Alas! it looks as if they were relinquishing all that is peculiar, all that is delightful and glorious in Christianity, and going back to Paganism; while the heathen, continuing to embrace the Gospel which they despise, are about to furnish the world with zealous preachers of pure Christianity. Many from amongst us have gone into the ministry with considerable literary attainments, well quali-

fied to read lectures on the different sciences; but, alas! entirely strangers to the "truth as it is in Jesus:" and therefore, instead of proclaiming with holy ardour of affection the love of God in Christ Jesus, to a world lying in wickedness; instead of exhibiting the Redeemer in the glory of his person, the fulness of his grace, and the wonders of his cross; and directing the sinner, trembling and ready to perish, to look up to their glorious hope and live; —they have, and that generally with cold indifference, preached what the Apostle checks himself for calling another Gospel: for indeed it contains nothing sufficient to inspire with hope and joy the hearts of such as find themselves involved in the miseries of the fall, and ready to perish. The consequences, therefore, have been awful. Christ's sheep would not hear these strangers and hirelings. They sought until they found where their Shepherd feeds his flocks; while, with heart-felt grief, they lament the change that has appeared in these many, very many, places of renown throughout the land, where once the power and glory of the Lord was seen, but from whence now that glory is departed. "The boar out of the wood has wasted the Lord's vineyard." The allusion may appear harsh, but it is an undoubted fact, that the most avowed and furious enemies of the church of God have done it no injury, in comparison of the desolation which those pretended friends have occasioned. May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give

mending him to others as the precious Foundation on which they may safely rest their eternal hopes: if it should appear by the condescension with which you apply yourself to feed the feeblest and the meanest of Christ's lambs, that you love the Chief Shepherd, and are like him: oh! it would be to me an occasion of ten thousand times greater joy, than to see you exalted on the highest pinnacle of literary eminence and honour; and I am sure it would be found to be ten thousand times more to your own satisfaction and advantage. "Him that honoureth me, will honour."

With love and best wishes, I remain,

My dear R——,

Yours truly,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXV.

TO MR. R—— B——.

April 8, 1797.

MY DEAR R—,

I HAVE ever felt a very earnest desire, and make it the matter of my continued prayer, that you may come forth into the ministry like a true Bezaleel, well qualified for the services of the sanctuary. This desire has dictated some plain and serious hints which I formerly addressed to you, and

beautiful harmony and radiance of the Divine attributes in the person and work of the Saviour. They have felt the pacifying and purifying efficacy of his most precious blood; and they have heard him say to their souls, "Fear not, I have redeemed thee." Thus they are prepared to go forth amongst their fellow-creatures, their fellow-sinners, proclaiming the grace, the glory, the preciousness of the Saviour, and enforcing all their counsels by affectionately declaring, "The Gospel which we preach, and which reveals a Saviour, is, indeed, the word of life; for we have not only heard it, but we have seen it with our eyes: we have closely, and with unalterable joy, looked upon it, and our hands have handled it." Oh! how different the preaching of such ministers from that of our modern and fashionable Dissenters! And let an impartial observer say, on which class does the Lord appear to command the blessing.—Once more. When God commissions any one to preach the Gospel, he puts his Spirit upon them. Barnabas was a good man, and *full of the Holy Ghost*, and of faith. Our Lord directed his Apostles to tarry at Jerusalem until they should be *endued with his Spirit.* O my dear R——, if I should live to see you, thus honoured of your Divine Master, appearing in the ministry, not as one improved by academic studies only, and sent of men, but as one commissioned by Christ, and filled with his Spirit; faithfully and affectionately preaching Jesus Christ, earnestly recom-

with far more penetration and heavenly skill, than moderns do, of the great things of God:—I mean, such as Owen, Howe, Goodwin, Flavel, and Charnock. Others you may occasionally read, if need be, to form your style; but these, to improve your piety, and increase your knowledge of the mystery of Christ. Others you may read, to add to your accomplishments as a scholar; but these, to add to your growth and usefulness as a Christian and a minister. Others, to polish your arrows; these, to sharpen them. With the same view, I would recommend you to seek much of the company of those Christians who appear to have most of the mind of Christ. Do not overlook them, though they may be poor; do not despise them, though they may be illiterate. If you are familiar with them, you will sometimes, perhaps, see reason to acknowledge you have gained from them, what is of inestimable value, even an increased acquaintance with "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Above all, be much at the spring-head: seek much communion with the Lord Jesus Christ: often read his sacred word with application to your own heart, and learn to meditate upon it with frequency and delight. Be much in secret prayer, and engage your heart in approaching unto God: look well to the actings of your soul when retired from your fellow-creatures; especially seek, seek earnestly a meek and lowly spirit before God: study the deep depravity of your own heart,

deep abasement at his feet. " Before
lity." " He filleth the hungry with
rich he sendeth empty away."
arch, diligently search, the motives
ou, and the end you prevailingly aim
hat you are actuated, not by self-love, but
e love of Christ; that you seek to recommend,
ot yourself, but your Master; that you labour to gain, not the applause of men, but the approbation of Christ; that you aim to promote principally, not your own temporal interest, but the Divine glory. This, my dear, is indeed a noble end to pursue: if with simplicity and godly sincerity you are enabled to seek it; if your heart be fixedly directed to the glory of God, and the manifestation of it in the salvation of man; you will so far resemble the blessed angels: nay, you will have the mind of Christ, who, at the close of his ministry and of his life, could say, " Father, I have glorified thee on earth." Such a heart as this was never found in a graceless minister; and even the best, on a careful observation of their own spirit, may see very much to grieve and humble them in this respect. Further, let me charge you, my dear R—, never to determine on the choice of a subject for public discourse, without first seriously reflecting, what is the great end you should be aiming at, what is the substance of the message you have to deliver, and what particular views of this message would at this time be

most likely to secure this great end. Never preach a sermon to others, without first preaching it to your own soul, and receiving the truth it contains in the love of it. I have already said, Read those books which contain the liveliest and the fullest representations of the religion of Christ, and of the heart; converse much with those Christians who habitually live near to Christ, and have drank deep into his spirit; and I now add, Improve every opportunity of hearing those ministers, in whatever class they are found, whom the Lord Jesus appears to honour with his richest blessing; who are wise to win souls, and in whose ministry the great end of its institution is most happily answered. Let me especially say, Never attempt to study or to preach a sermon, without lifting up your heart in earnest prayer to Him in whom is all your sufficiency, whose almighty grace alone can secure the success you would wish. Finally, let nothing appear in your temper and conduct to prejudice the minds of any against the doctrine or the religion you preach, or that might lead them to suspect the sincerity with which you profess to seek their everlasting interests. For other useful hints, let me recommend to your perusal a valuable letter of Mr. Morton's, one of the ejected ministers in Cornwall, which you will find in the third volume of Calamy's abridgement, page 198. May that God, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, make you full of the Holy

Ghost, and of faith, and crown your labours with success!

I am,

My dear R——,

Your truly affectionate father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXVI.

TO THE REV. R—— B——.

Nov. 24, 1799.

MY DEAR R—,

On Saturday last, I received your letter, mentioning an invitation you had received from D—, in Lancashire. I have an idea, that the congregation there was many years under the pastoral care of Mr. S——, whom I formerly was acquainted with, and have heard at T——; if so, there are many among them who know the precious truths of the Gospel, and love the unadulterated word of God. Through whatever channel the invitation has reached you, I am by no means disposed to discourage your visit to such a people; and noticing the leadings of Providence respecting the line of your farther duty, I would hope that the hand of a kind Providence is directing your views to them, and that it may prove a sphere of usefulness to yourself, and of high importance to the souls of others. Though the people in general may be poor and illiterate, dwell-

ing in an obscure part of the land, yet their salvation is of equal importance with that of those who are placed far above them in worldly advantages. To deal with the souls of men, and especially with a multitude, about their eternal concerns, is a matter of the last importance. I thought very seriously of it many years ago, but in every view I feel it more and more. I see more and more reason to be assiduous and diligent, to be affectionate and faithful, in the discharge of the various duties relative to this important function, both public and private. I see more and more the necessity of having a deep and experimental acquaintance with the disease of sin, the awful debility of man's fallen nature, and of having the heart habitually impressed with the affecting consideration. I see and feel the need, and, I trust, something of the advantage, of having my own soul kept continually looking to Jesus, applying to that effectual remedy, and conversing with the doctrine of the cross, so as to feed on the bread of life, and to come, with repentance and faith, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling. I still see and feel the necessity of exercising a jealousy over my own heart. Time was, when I little suspected that I could be justly charged with so great a measure of self-confidence and self-seeking as I have since found reason to be deeply humbled on the account of. Oh! I find it no easy matter, under fair professions and after long experience, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek

his glory "with simplicity and godly sincerity." I do not wonder at the many exercises, and some of them very painful ones, to which my great Master has been pleased to call me, in order that I might indeed be a vessel of honour prepared for his service. I still find more and more need of humble dependence and prayer; more necessity for abiding in Christ, separate from whom I can do nothing: and something, I hope, I feel in myself, and something I see in the fruit of my labours, of the beneficial effects of an increasing acquaintance with, and watchfulness over, my own heart, and a more humble and habitual dependence upon the Spirit of God. For, after all, salvation is God's work in every view: it is wholly his work, and he will have it to appear, and to be acknowledged to be his work: and the more humble, the more self-emptied, and self-abased, the instrument is whom he employs, the more reason we have to expect, that God will put honour upon it. May the Spirit of God, my dear R—, give you an increased acquaintance with your own heart, and direct and enable you to abide in Christ, as the source of all your sufficiency, that you may be found a scribe well-instructed unto the kingdom of God! If that blessed Agent should be pleased to glorify Christ, exalting him in your estimation by an impressive display of his excellencies; and in the estimation of others, by enabling you to recommend him with effect; he will, at the same

time, exalt you as his messenger and advocate, in the esteem of all those to whom Christ is precious. Oh, may you go to the Christian assembly at D——, as Philip went down to Antioch, "to preach CHRIST unto them;" to proclaim his worth, his grace, his suitableness, the wonders of his love, the dignity of his person, and the preciousness of his salvation; preaching not yourself, but Christ Jesus the Lord; labouring to shew to those who may hear you, at once their own hopeless state and the grace and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ! Professors of Christianity *talk* of Christ and love to Christ; but to the broken in heart he is precious indeed! I commend you, my dear R—, to God, the best instructor, and to the word of his grace, your surest guide; having affectionately communicated to you these few hints of what experience has recommended to me.

I remain, my dear R—,

Very truly yours,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXVII.

TO THE REV. R—— B——.

Dec. 4, 1789.

MY DEAR R—,

I DULY received yours, which gave me at once pain and pleasure. I felt much sympathy with you in the sufferings you must have endured, and I hope much gratitude to God for the wonderful experience you have had of his preserving mercy. Truly, he is the God of salvation, and blessed are all they who put thei trust in him! His name, indeed, is "*Jehovah Jireh.*" He is now presenting you with a new impression of it in capital letters. Let it be worn by you as a sacred breast-plate on your very heart; and let every fresh view of it stimulate to duty. Is His eye upon me as that of a parent on the child he loves, or as the eye of the nursing mother on the infant she carries in her arms? Then let mine eye wait upon him as the eyes of a servant look to the hands of his master, and as the eyes of a maiden to the hands of her mistress. Does he continually watch my path? does he attend my lying down and my rising up? "Awake, asleep, at home, abroad, am I surrounded still with God?" Then let me attentively and affectionately watch the intimations of his will, and carefully improve every opportunity of glorifying him in my body and in my spirit, which

are his. May the Lord, my dear R—, shew you yet more of his mercy; affording to your understanding a larger view, and to your heart richer and more delightful experience thereof! It is the cement of Divine friendship, and the spring of all spiritual obedience. Something of God's mercy he shews us now, or the desire of the soul would not tend in any degree towards him: but when mercy shall finally remove the veil of darkness from our minds, and shall appear to us arrayed in her own unclouded and transcendent beauty; when thus unveiled she shall beautify us with her precious salvation in every part; shall enrich us with all her treasures, carry us to sit down at an eternal banquet of celestial delights, and at the king's right hand, oh! with what admiring eyes and hearts shall we then contemplate *mercy;* what love and zeal will glow within us; what transports of joy and gratitude shall we feel, and what songs shall we raise! Oh! how inadequate and how low our conceptions here of the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of mercy! and hence the languor so apparent and so much to be lamented in our best services, and in our very hearts. Oh, mercy! mercy! be this, my dear R—, the subject of your frequent contemplation, the ground of your hope, the spring of all your services, the principle of your consolation, and your heaven will not be all future. In proportion as God is pleased to shew you his mercy, will your heart be bound by her cords, and your days and powers be employed in

devoutly sacrificing at her shrine. Then the rich treasures of mercy will be your sanctuary amid every alarm, the smiles of mercy will fill you with joy unspeakable, and in the bosom of mercy you will at last sweetly breathe out your departing spirit. Wishing you the unspeakable advantage of living near to God,

I am, my dear R—, very affectionately,

Your father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXVIII.

TO THE REV. R— B—.

Dec. 1799.

MY DEAR R—,

It affords me pleasure, beyond what I can express, to find your mind impressed with the importance of the trust committed to you, and seriously concerned to discharge it faithfully. I cannot but consider it as a token for good, that he has rich blessings to dispense by your means. Indeed, it is a high privilege to see the Gospel by a Divine light *ourselves;* to see the glory of God, the lustre and harmony of his perfections, in the face of Jesus Christ; to see how sin has reigned unto death through the first Adam; and how grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by the second

hopes and its fears, its griefs and its joys, will correspond with its blessed original: as truly as the new-born babe rests on the arm and hangs on the breast of its nursing mother, so will the heaven-born soul lean upon Jesus, depending on him for all it needs, and "desiring the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby." There is one material circumstance, however, and the only one that I at present recollect, wherein the allegory will not accord, and that is this: the child of nature, after a while, becomes able to care for itself, and independent of its nurse. This is never the case with the child of grace: he is every day, and every hour dependent: years make no difference in this respect; he can never go alone, yea, he can never stand alone; he cannot pray, he cannot breathe, he cannot live, but as he has communion with the Prince of Life: if the Spirit of Jesus withhold his influence, alas, how he languishes! how doth sin, which is the very essence of death, work within him!

But what a ground of rejoicing to the humble believer is the everlasting covenant of grace, "ordered in all things, and sure!" How delightful to those who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, to think, that "it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" that however their frames may vary, and faith, the bond of union on their part, be enfeebled, yet their "life is hid with Christ in God!" What a comfort to find, that as the branch is nourished by the vine, and the

nembers of the body by the head, so our souls are ontinually nourished, and fed, and comforted, and uickened, and strengthened, by indissoluble union nd communion with the Lord Jesus! What encouagement it affords, in the prospect of arduous duty, o hear him say, "My grace is sufficient for thee!" Iow it relieves the mind, under the apprehension f unusual and grievous trials, to be assured that y tender sympathy he participates in all our sorows, and that he will proportion the supply of his pirit to all our need! How it tends to compose and atisfy our minds, amidst the darkness that veils uturity from our view, to remember Jesus as our ife, and hear him say, "Because I live, ye shall ive also!" The blessed Apostle Paul had a sweet ense of the reality of this union, when, amidst all his abours and sufferings, he said, "I am crucified vith Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ hat liveth in me." Blessed Jesus! How doth this nion proclaim the immensity of his nature, the fulness of his grace, and the unmeasurable tenderness f his heart! How happy that man who is thus nited to Christ, and has an abiding sense of this nion upon his heart! What a life of high privilege nd distinguished honour does he live, whose expeience has taught him to say, "The life I now live n the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, vho loved me, and gave himself for me!" Oh! here s a blessed preparation for the closet and the pulpit; or all the duties, the cares, the labours, the temp-

tations, and troubles of life, and also for its close. The believer sleeps in Jesus, but he never dies; he leaves the world, but it is only leaving the humbling, painful discipline of his minority, to go to his Father's home, to enter upon the possession of his own proper inheritance, and be for ever with the Lord. With the most affectionate wish for your comfort and usefulness,

I remain, dear R—,

Your Father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXIX.

TO THE REV. R—— B——.

May, 1800.

MY DEAR R—,

I AM glad to find you have any encouraging appearances among the people of your charge. You have a large field, and for the most part it has the appearance of an uncultivated and neglected soil. May it be your solicitude, and your happiness, to present yourself before God approved *now*, in the day of your labour, and in the evening when you give up your account! Experience has long taught me, that in keeping his commandments there is great reward; that duty and privilege, service and recompence, are close companions. While we serve

the Lord with our spirits, "in all labour there is profit:" but how hard is it to rise above self, and to act with true singleness of heart for the glory of the Lord; to covet, not the esteem and praise of men, but the approving smiles of Christ! Alas! how prone are we to be governed by carnal and worldly views, and to take more pains to display our own gifts, than to unfold the grace and glory of our Master! And have we not, sometimes, even when we would be understood as zealously preaching Christ, felt a great deal more anxiety, as to what the people will think of *us*, than as to what they will think of Christ? My dear R—, experience, which has often made me ashamed, yea even confounded at myself, constrains me to admonish you to be afraid of your own heart.

I wish you to apply to the reading of such books as are calculated to furnish your understanding with the most enlarged and distinguishing views of Gospel truth, and to cherish the sacred fervour of your spirit in serving the Lord. You have Dr. Owen's works, and therein you will find the deep things of God, as they relate to the religion of the heart, admirably illustrated. You have Hervey's Dialogues; and I know of no publication that affords a clearer representation of Gospel truth, in a more rational, amiable, or beneficial point of view. Very many have had reason, from experience, to give this book a very high recommendation. You have Hill's sermons, and I think Henry's: they are good models. But while I thus strongly recommend your

careful and diligent reading these and other books, the productions of men full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, I would, with far greater earnestness still, advise a constant, careful, assiduous attention to the *Scriptures*. If a minister would be truly eloquent and eminently useful, he must be *mighty in the Scriptures*, he must take much pains in reading them, so that the Word of God may dwell in him richly. There is no treasure so enriching; there is no spring of consolation so effectual. A superficial reading leaves the mind destitute of a rich variety of sublime and precious truths, on which, by careful and diligent reading, we might feast with great delight. For my own part, I read the Scriptures more than ever, and my esteem for them, and delight in them, increases more and more. I find far more in them to gratify and solace the mind than ever I did; and I grieve that I have not, in my youth, taken more pains to acquire excellent knowledge and spiritual entertainment in this way. The practice of expounding the Scriptures you will find helpful in these respects; and your people would be likely to derive from that mode of instruction, occasionally adopted, more improvement, perhaps, than from sermons. There needs, indeed, the useof every probable expedient to win souls to Christ, and, in order to that, to remove the natural blindness of the mind, and communicate the saving truths of the Gospel to the understanding and the heart. We know, and are assured, that the power belongeth

nto God: but the means are in our power; and a rvent solicitude to secure the salvation of men, rough the effectual blessing of God, will appear in e *choice*, and sometimes in the *change*, of the eans. May the smile of God, all-sufficient, be er upon you!

I am, my dear R—,

Your very affectionate Father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXX.

TO THE REV. R—— B——.

Nov. 1805.

Y DEAR R——,

My heart is made glad by the representation of the lessing that attends your labours, and can well enter to the joy you must feel, when a company of young quirers after Christ and salvation are associated to ceive instruction and encouragement from your ps. This dissipates the mournful cloud which so ften hovers over the ways of Zion, and changes e sorrowful accents of complaint into songs of joy nd of praise. May the dews of heavenly blessing ontinue to descend! May the arm of the Lord be till more gloriously revealed, and the voice of rejoicing and salvation be long heard amongst you! May the Lord command the sun long to stand still,

under its welcome light and influence! May the victories of Gospel-truth be multiplied, and the pleasure of the Lord abundantly prosper in your hands! The Lord keep us in the arms of his almighty grace, and feed our strength from day to day, by fellowship with himself, lest the sons of Zeruiah should be too hard for us! O the advantage of daily fellowship with Jesus, to find a burning glass in devout meditation on his glory, from time to time to kindle our lamp afresh by the collected rays of that heavenly sun! But a continued succession of light and cheerful days, we are not warranted to expect in this present fluctuating and cloudy state. Our Lord will be training us up to live more by faith, and less by sense and sight. It is not always we can say, "While I was musing, the fire burned." We sometimes read his word, when we do not perceive the small still voice of a loving Saviour there. We come to the altar of God, when no fire from Heaven descends to enflame the sacrifice. We come to his house, and return, without that vision of his glory, that enlivening fellowship, which at some seasons have filled us with all joy and peace in believing. While our sky is bright and clear, we should call to mind what a changing climate we live in, nor wonder or be dismayed when clouds arise. The best evidence of great grace, and the best security of Divine consolation, is deep humility: the highest archangel is the humblest too, and lies in the deepest prostration at the feet of Jesus. The

Lord grant, that in this most prominent feature of true excellency, we may shine brighter and brighter! Oh to be willing to be abased, and even neglected, that Christ may be the more exalted and admired; —to be willing to serve our Lord faithfully and perseveringly, even though he should not continue to distinguish us amongst his servants; and willing also, for his name and glory sake, to wear a vail before our fellow-creatures, when he is pleased to put honour upon us! Praying that the abundant dews of heavenly blessings may be showered on you abundantly,

I am, my dear R—,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXI.

TO REV. T—— AND MRS. W——,

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

MY DEAR SON AND DAUGHTER,

AMIDST the clouds and darkness that obscure the events of the present state, what a mercy it is that faith can trace seasons of rejoicing which are far beyond the sphere of sense! Sense cannot otherwise than very painfully feel, when the dear partakers of our own flesh and blood are committed breathless to the tomb. But how sweet the relief which faith sug-

gests, while she sings, "The sufferer is released;" the heavy laden captive is "sent forth from the pit wherein is no water;" and points to the happy spirit, no longer oppressed, but exulting in the glorious liberty of a child of God! Well, it is enough for you to know, that you shall go to him, though he shall not return to you. Such a hope may well reconcile you to a temporary separation, though that separation may sometimes provoke you to cry,

> Haste, my Redeemer, fetch my soul
> Up to thy courts above!

The sufferings of this dear child are now as a dream when one awaketh. Scarcely can he realize a parent but in his God, a home but in heaven; while Divine munificence mingles grace and glory, to render that home delightful, to the exclusion of every idea of deprivation. Think of him as gone to a better country. Oh how much better than this, of which our foolish hearts are so strangely fond! What less than wretchedness itself, would our condition here be, were it not for some transient correspondence with Heaven; some beams of glorious light, which now and then pierce the thick darkness that intervenes; some hope of one day receiving permission to put off this earthly house of our tabernacle, and rise and dwell above:

> Shew me in Christ, that thou art mine,
> For there's my only rest;
> Then calmly I my breath resign,
> And smile to be undrest.

It is well, when the burthen of sorrow and of sin, which here so heavily oppresseth us, is made to excite in us a strong desire to lay entirely aside every weight, and to lay hold even now of eternal life. Yet it may be our Lord's will that we should still serve him here, and be kept under tutors and governors a little longer: and his time is the best time: his will be done in us and by us. The Lord comfort and bless you!

I am, my dear children,

Your affectionate father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXII.

TO MR. AND MRS. N——.

UPON THEIR MARRIAGE.

I HAVE accompanied your entrance on the world with many a careful solicitude, many a fervent supplication, and many a grateful reflection. When I think what a field of conflict and distressful suffering the world has proved to many, and what a dark and dismal night may again overspread our favoured country, I find it no easy matter to repress the crowd of anxious cares that creature-love induces. I think of myself as hidden in the grave, or as exulting in heaven. I consider my dear children, at least some of them, as tossed with waves on the

stormy sea, or combating the horrors of a dreary waste, while

> A thousand savage beasts of prey
> Around the forest roam.

But let us never indulge in apprehensions of this nature, without bearing in mind, at the same time, the sweet promises of the grace of God, and the memorable experiences of his suffering people. I had rather you should fear the corruptions of your own hearts, and be afraid of the snares of sensual gratification and worldly prosperity. I believe there is a way where danger never comes; where there is perfect security from all real evil, and the sweetest enjoyment of creature-good; and that is, "the way of holiness." In this way you will escape, my dear children, a thousand snares and defilements. You will possess sweet repose amidst many occasions of fear and disquietude. You will find a blessed harbour amidst stormy trials. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." This is the way wherein the redeemed find great peace and perfect safety. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast go up thereon." This is a way cast up and prepared at a vast expense of labour and of blood. ONE has gone up before you, who has cleared the way of impediments, paved it with love, opened numberless springs of consolation, and caused many a renowned pillar of remembrance to be erected there. The beams of abundant grace, communicated from his unmer-

surable fulness, have often relieved the pilgrim's toil, and filled him with joy and peace in believing. Take heed to keep in this way;—to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Let his word and his example be your rule, his love your principle, and his glory your end. Search the Scriptures; observe his providence; watch the motions of his Spirit; that you may clearly know his will. Set the Lord always before you, in all the wonders of his dying love, that this living spring may be ever flowing, and the love of Christ sweetly and abundantly constrain you. Let your eye be fixed upon Him in his word, in his ordinances, in his providences, and in his people. Whatever medium you have heretofore found the vehicle of light, life, or love, let your soul wait upon him, and wait for him therein. Take care your expectation be not from the creature, from ministers and means, but from Christ. Wonder not if your expectations sometimes fail: perhaps it is in great mercy that you are disappointed; it is to rebuke your creature-confidence; it is to teach you to look to the Lord alone. A change of situation may be attended with a considerable variation in privileges, duties, and temptations. As to your privileges, be afraid of a carnal mind: regard not so much the vessel, as the treasure it contains; not so much the messenger, as his message and his Master: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee." If he make choice of a mean

and lowly vehicle, it is in condescension to our frailty, that our admiring and believing eyes may be fixed on the Lord alone. Let your desire be to see Jesus: let your soul go forth to meet him, and you will not often find disappointment. He will prove to you, not like a brook in summer to the weary traveller, but like the rock in the wilderness, that flowed in refreshing and abundant streams in a dry and thirsty land. A change of situation will be attended with new calls of duty, and with new and important trusts. Endeavour to know the duty of your situation, and be solicitous to approve yourselves to Him, who has been pleased to lodge a talent in your hands. You are born for society: be ambitious, in some form or other, to do good and to communicate: remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Endeavour to unite industry and frugality with generous goodness and brotherly love. Mind your own things, but especially mind the things that are Christ's. In order to this, be conversant with his people, be familiar with them, be kindly affectionate towards them; under their peculiar trials afford them the aid, at least, of sympathy. Remember that yourselves also are in the body. Endeavour after uninterrupted Christian fellowship, though it be but with few; and the better to secure it, indulge no highly raised expectations from the creature; reckon upon infirmities; have no apo-

logy ready for real errors; but rise above noticing any little occurrences that little minds would consider as slights, and occasions of distance and interruptions of friendship. I know, that "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from above:" therefore my prayer for you is, that God would "bless you and make you blessings!" that he would so fill you with his Spirit that your light may shine before men, and your temper and conversation reflect the lovely and enlivening beams of his grace; that every year may be signalized by his abounding goodness, and by your gratitude!

I am, my dear children,

Your affectionate father,

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXIII.

TO REV. D—— AND MRS. W——.

MY DEAR SON AND DAUGHTER,

You have, it seems, already learned by experience, what you were long since taught in theory; that this world, to every one that is bound for heaven, is a wilderness, in which wants, and griefs, and dangers abound. You had gone but a stage or two together in your pilgrimage, when you found bitterness mingled with your dearest delights, and

your enjoyment of your most valued creature-possessions interrupted with alarms. I have often considered your sorrows with sympathy; but when I think what the God of salvation has done, and is engaged to do for you, I congratulate you and adore. Thorns and briars, the dreadful hissing of serpents and the roaring of savage beasts of prey, will not suffer you to forget where you are; but you know who hath said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you;" "my presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest;" "I will not leave you until I have done all that which I have spoken to you of." Such promises from the lips of our Redeemer, and ratified by his own precious blood;—promises confirmed by the miraculous supplies granted you from the dropping heavens, and the flowing rock; and by the cloudy pillar shining with increased brightness in the night of adversity, when darkness veils the glory, the delusive glory, of the world: promises attested by faith's discovery and evidence of the everlasting hills, rising in certain, however distant, prospect; and by the faithful and true Witness, who at the head of a numberless and shining train, all bearing the same testimony, long since entered, and is still entering into his glory:—such promises may surely fire your souls with courage and zeal, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing; nay, and make you, "exceeding joyful in all your tribulations." My prayer then always for you shall be, that our God

would "fulfil in you the work of faith with power!" that he would enable you to live upon his truth, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God; though sense, supported by a clamorous host of doubts and fears, should bring up an evil report, and cry, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Faith is a supernatural principle wrought in the soul, by the Spirit of God, in regeneration, whereby a renewed sinner understands, believes, embraces, and lives upon the promise of salvation in Christ Jesus. The believer has an eye to see the glory of Christ; an ear to hear his voice. He possesses spiritual sense, whereby to feel the impressions of his truth and his grace, his smile, or his frown, and to perceive the sweet savour of his name; he has a heart to receive, to embrace, and rejoice in the Saviour; he has a new principle of life, which is maintained by communion with him. Thus with his mind the Christian serves the law of God: but there is another principle, there is a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. Hence the life of faith is no easy life; it is a life of arduous labour and conflict; it is a *work*. There are few believers, I apprehend, but have found the work of faith, under some peculiar exercises especially, to be a hard and arduous work. *They*, I believe, find it much more easy, and much more pleasant than others, not whose faith is less severely tried, but with whom

it is constant habitual work; who set the Lord always before them; who look unto him as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters; who are careful to learn and do his will; and who maintain the most intimate and endearing fellowship with him. If we suffer ourselves to remit and become negligent and superficial in the work of faith, we shall find it hard to believe when sharp trials come; and perhaps, too, shall find our Lord, in displeasure, withdrawn; and then it will be well for us, if, with tears and heart-rending grief, we can cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" You, my children, may yet have to know seasons of distressful darkness and doubt: the reasonings of unbelief, together with the charges which Satan may be permitted to exhibit, may prevail to shake your confidence; and you may find it a great work to satisfy your trembling anxieties, by opposing the *testimony* of *God* to all the powers of *darkness* and *unbelief*. This is one great work of faith: Paul was carried through it triumphantly; under a sweet view of God and of the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ; as that glorious challenge shews, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" It is also the work of faith to make sin appear hateful, to render the yoke of Christ easy: and it effects this, by presenting to the soul affecting views of the dying love of Christ. Nothing, if experience may speak, is calculated so powerfully to humble a believing sinner, to pierce the heart in contrition and penitence, to fire the soul

with zeal, fervour, and resolution in the service of Christ, as sitting at the foot of the cross, and devoutly beholding the unutterable agonies of him "who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*."—Another great work of faith is, to overcome the bias found in our very nature to the *covenant* of *works*; and this it does by casting the soul in the mould of the Gospel; yet where, on this side heaven, is this work complete? Where is the believer who does not in sad experience find the remains of this natural bias? In this respect, I must say, "I cannot do the things which I would;" but I am sure of this, that that man is peculiarly blessed who practically and entirely goes out of himself, to lean and live upon Christ. Such a soul prospers, and is in health; lives, and lives abundantly. Hence that remark, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—"Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Oh! this is to live indeed. It is the life of a heaven-born soul, supported by the bread of heaven, and living in the suburbs of heaven. May this be, my dear children, increasingly your life!—It is the work of faith, likewise, to *overcome the world;* and this it does in a day of prosperity, with reference to the good things of the world, by representing, in the Cross of Christ, the hatred the world bore to Christ, and what a friend Christ shewed himself to sinners, in the ransom he paid, the grace, the glory, he purchased for them. Thus it was the Apostle felt, "God forbid that I should glory," &c.

Hereby the earthly mind is overcome; a spiritual and heavenly frame is produced and maintained; and the world loses its interest in the heart, and its power to deceive. Faith gains this victory, also, by giving the soul a view of Christ, in his grace and glory, and feasting the soul with the love of Christ. When we have drunk of the living water, in the manifested love of Christ, and in the anticipation of immediate and perpetual fellowship with him in heaven, we feel rich satisfaction; we thirst no more. In the lustre of the opening scene, the world almost disappears, "as a dim candle dies at noon." And in a day of adversity, with respect to the evil things of the world, faith gains the victory by looking into the everlasting covenant, and revealing its security, its rich, satisfying, and everlasting treasures; by looking up to God, and fixedly looking unto Jesus, to the cross, and to the throne; and by looking within the veil and contemplating the glory that awaits a follower of the suffering Jesus. Oh! then we are raised above the fear of evil; no wants, no terrors, can affright us: we can bear our light affliction, which is for a moment, with complacency, in the wise, the holy, the fatherly will of God; and supply every creature want, and repair every creature-loss, in the riches of the glory of God. The work of faith appears, also, in enabling us to trust in the Lord, while walking in darkness, and to believe his love, under his hidings and his frowns. And, oh! peculiarly blessed are they in the solemn hour

of death, in whom a faith is found, that needeth not to be ashamed, enabling the ransomed sinner to meet death with a smile, and, looking unto Jesus, to say with unshaken confidence, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit—thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." My dear children, may our God fulfil in you the work of faith with power! The means are your's, the power is God's. The prevalence of faith is often found in the severer exercise of it, because we are then most humble and prayerful; and nothing can so much as this delight and exalt the Christian, recommend religion, and shew forth the praise and glory of God. There are seasons wherein God is pleased, in a peculiar manner, to make his power known in this respect. Sometimes it has appeared in a time of great affliction. What fervour of humble, believing prayer has then been manifested! What meekness and content, what justifying of God, what firm adherence to the truth, what willingness to make every sacrifice which God requires! Sometimes it has appeared when the Christian has been called to arduous and hazardous duty. It was found in the experience of Abraham, of Moses, of Caleb, of David; of Apostles and Martyrs. There have also been found instances, wherein faith has been eminently manifested in times of outward prosperity, as in the case of Moses in Egypt, &c. There are those, also, in whom the peaceable fruits of righteousness have been found to appear abundantly after times of severe

exercise; so abundantly, as to make it manifest that God has been fulfilling in them the work of faith with power. Their growth in grace has been manifest, as the stature of a child many times after some severe bodily illness; as the growth of a tree sometimes after much pruning; as the progress of a ship that has been driven by a stormy but fair or side wind. Endearing fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ will, also, always have a sweet influence on our faith, our love, our gratitude, our whole temper and life. We cannot converse habitually with Heaven without becoming heavenly; we cannot live in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness without feeling a powerful attraction heavenwards. May you thus live! May your trials be thus sanctified, and you will count them among your most valued blessings! May the Lord fulfil in you, my dear children, this work of faith with power! Amen, and Amen.

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXIV.

TO THE REV. D—— AND MRS. W——.

1794.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

By this time, I suppose, you are returned from G——, and are deliberating on the happiest mo

thod of pursuing the journey of life which you have (with submission to the sovereign will of Heaven) pledged yourselves to accomplish together. May the Prince of Life shine on your union, and preserve it, through a long succession of years, with increasing advantages! As you proceed in this journey, you must count upon changes. Revolving years, perhaps revolving days, will exhibit still new scenes; some of them pleasureable, but many of them distressful. Sometimes you will taste the love of God in wilderness comforts, and realize more blissful enjoyment in wilderness prospects. At other times, clouds and darkness will encompass your paths; you will find yourselves amidst dismal deeps and dangerous snares, toiling in what to you may appear fruitless and hopeless service, till your soul is "discouraged because of the way." Your wisdom, then, will be to "lay a good foundation against the time to come;" to lay up your "treasure in heaven." That is a bank which never fails. In its unsearchable riches all they who have obtained precious faith have one common interest, and have access to it at all times and from all places. And such is the immensity of treasure there, that there never was a draft presented in the faith of Jesus but was admitted and honoured: the great Lord of all, with every grant, still encouraging and inviting further and larger demands, says, in infinite grace, "According to your faith be it unto you;" accounting himself most honoured by the largest expectations.

I have no doubt, my dear children, but it is your solicitude to begin this journey with God, and to engage his presence with you. Suffer me to say, you cannot be too explicit in the solemn business of covenanting with God. I have known various seasons wherein I have greatly needed the strong consolation which a transaction of this nature is calculated to provide: and I have known seasons wherein this plea, "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good," sent up to Heaven from the darkness and deeps of affliction, has obtained returns incomparably more precious than thousands of gold and of silver.

Thus commencing your pilgrimage under the influence of a Divine promise, you must remember what you are leaving, and whither you are tending; remember that you have professed to renounce with abhorrence the idols of your native state, the sin of your heart, and the corruption that is in the world through lust; that henceforth it must become your great aim to be "made free from sin," to have "your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," with God and in God. O blessed end of our faith! how far it transcends what Israel found in the promised land! O glorious hope, amidst the labours and troubles of our way!

We are travelling home to God
In the way the fathers trod:
They are happy now, and we
Soon their happiness shall see.

You will find abundant advantage in keeping

this end in sight; the sense of many a trouble will be diminished, and your joy in the Lord will prevail, in proportion to the fixedness of your eye and heart in this respect. If your heart be directed into the love of God, you will estimate your happiness, not by the measure of creature-good you enjoy, but by the nearness of your soul's approach to its proper centre; you will value outward dispensations in proportion as they express the love of God to you, or as they speed your progress to the chosen rest; you will value your connections and friends in proportion as they excite your love to God, or as expressions of his love to you; and you will form your opinion of God's dealings with you, not by sense, but by faith; not by their appearance, but by God's covenant as to their effect. You will then suppress many gloomy and complaining thoughts: you will charge your soul to *believe* that God is faithful who hath called you, to *follow* where he leads, and to rest assured, that if he lead you into darkness and into deeps, it is the right way to the blessed end which his promise bids you expect. Indeed, if God should be pleased to lead you about in the rugged path of suffering, "through a land of desert and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death," it will perhaps be to instruct you further in the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the deep depravity of your own heart: being thus instructed, you will silence yourselves under the hand of God, feeling (in a measure at least) as

Ephraim felt, when, "after he was instructed, he smote upon his thigh, when he was ashamed," &c. In active service likewise, you must be solicitous to have your eye directed to God, and to his glory as the end you are to pursue. O! blessed attainment! to rise above self, and with singleness of heart to serve our God; to have the mind of Christ, who "pleased not himself, who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister." We shall then be less solicitous about the manner and the exterior circumstances of the service we perform, and even its success, than about the principle by which we are actuated; we shall then be less concerned about the smile of the world, and the praise of men; we shall derive satisfaction from the omniscience of God, and labour to be accepted of *Him*. Now you are entering the field of labour, and of conflict; for such has the way to God been ever found: but the life you are called to live in the flesh is a life of *faith*—precious faith! which embraces the promise, which looks within the veil, looks unto Jesus, beholds his glory, and beholds him near. O! there is light, there is strength, there is "all joy and peace in believing." May you be ever seen coming up out of the wilderness, leaning upon this blessed Immanuel! Give yourselves wholly to him, accept your all from him, and maintain daily nearness to him: then you need "be careful for nothing, but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known your requests unto God:" then, what-

ever griefs attend you, whatever losses you sustain, whatever separations death may be permitted to make among your dearest connections, you will find in the presence of your Saviour, and the assured prospect of your heavenly Father's home, a sweet antidote to excessive grief, and a source of joy unspeakable.

I pray God to give you increasing favour in the religious society with which you stand connected; to bless you, in that connection, with hearts affectionately desirous of promoting the welfare of each individual; to honour you in his service, and to make you blessings. I have no doubt but you will experience much real friendship from them, and I think your wisdom will lead you, in the intercourse of friendship, *to seek to please others rather than yourselves;* to make many a sacrifice of what may relate to your own ease and indulgence, in order to demonstrate your friendship to others.

I am, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXV.

TO THE REV. D—— W——.

Jan. 21, 1812.

My dear Son, my Brother and Companion in tribulation, and in the "kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,"

I AM prepared by the painful trials which I have endured, to sympathise in your sorrows; and by the wonderful supports I have found, and by the special consolations I have been favoured with, to say to you, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Fear *yourself*, your own heart, lest you should let go your hold of the promise; lest you should have recourse to any sinful shifts to avoid evil; lest you should value the smile of the creature more than the favour of God; lest you should be enfeebled and unfitted for the discharge of your duty: — but fear none of those troubles, which put you upon fleeing unto God; which excite a dread of grieving his Spirit; which put you upon closer self-examination; which revive the spirit of prayer in you; and which render the promises, the ordinances, and the special presence of God, more desirable and more sweet unto you. Under these circumstances, to yield to slavish fear, would be to idolize the creature, and to disparage the power and promise of God: it were

to undervalue his fatherly love and promised care of his tried people. He knows their sorrows: graciously he says, "I have seen, I have seen, the afflictions of my people." He is with them to help them, to bear them up under their various sorrows, and to render those sorrows beneficial. Indeed, his most gracious visits are often made to them in the darkest vale of suffering: the richest grapes of Eschol are pressed into the cup of the Israelite indeed, when the labours and trouble of the wilderness are most severe. What if all men forsake us, if we can secure the presence of God, and a good conscience: with these, we may travel the wilderness through, and want nothing, and fear nothing. With these companions, Paul felt "ready to be offered;" and his great Master, opposing the all-controuling sovereignty of his heavenly Father to the power and pride of men, thus preserved his soul in perfect peace: "Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." All your concerns are in a Father's hand, and every wind that blows is subject to his sovereign controul: then, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Why is not the righteous bold as a lion? Why does he not in imagination seem to grasp the prize, even while sustaining the severest conflict? O let us run the arduous race, "looking unto Jesus:" his eye is ever on us, and will be till we quit the field; and then will he look with the smile of congratulation, while, with all the saints, we rest on our beds, and enjoy the glory (now set before us) at an eternal

banquet. We rejoice in the prospect open before you; we trust that it indicates that God has begun to deliver and to provide. If it be the will of God, you will have no occasion to make haste; he will carry on and perfect that which concerns you. Be still: you will hear his voice; you will see his goings; you will be furnished with a lamp to direct your steps. As for ourselves, the clouds are returning after the rain; only there is seen a bow in the cloud, and it is inscribed with, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Blessed be God, his promise is precious. and as powerful as ever. "They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed;" nor shall any be ashamed who trust in him.—The Lord be with you, to bless you and yours!

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXVI.

TO MISS R——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I FEEL reluctance in addressing you in a way of Christian counsel, on no other ground than the consideration of the invaluable opportunity of pastoral assistance you enjoy, within the pale of your own communion. Yet if I write, while your good pastor speaks, it may be some satisfaction, perhaps, to you to find the same truths attested, and the

e grounds of relief suggested, by both. A
sage from a letter of yours, expressed a degree
disquietude which it raised in me a wish to
instrumental in relieving. Matters of this na-
e are of too great importance to admit of flat-
and compliment: I wish therefore to use, and
will permit, that freedom which Christian love
r dictates. You express an earnest solicitude
ut salvation, an high estimation of Christ and
benefits; but, after a profession of several years,
are much distressed with the fear that you have
part in Christ. Your case is not unprecedented,
is it rare: indeed, uncomfortable as it is, I wish
vere more frequent. It is far better than that
d and slumbering indifference, which is too visi-
on the face of the profession of many, but which
acknowledge you have not to complain of.
tter to be disquieted for want of these fruits of the
irit, which, however pleasant, are not essential to
safety, than to be at ease in Zion without se-
us inquiry. You wish to know whether you are
ong God's saved people. Shall I hope that you
not so far under the influence of temptation, as
t to be open to conviction, or to resist the force of
in and scriptural truth. It would be unpleasing to
d, and cruel to our own souls, to resist the Holy
ost in a case of this nature. I will first notice
at you express, and what you acknowledge, that
s the appearance of the fruit of the Spirit. You
l an earnest desire to possess Christ, and to be

entirely his; and your heart is distressed with the fear, that, after a long profession, this is not your case. If I can judge aright, the desire you express is more than that of the natural man or the hypocrite; and if you are just to yourself, I think you must acknowledge it to be so. Your heart, I trust, will bear witness that it is a desire of Christ above all the world; as the pearl of great price, to obtain which, you are WILLING TO SELL ALL. It arises from a humble broken spirit, condemned, but hoping; sensible both of the bitterness of sin and the sweetness of pardon. It is not a transient desire, awakened by some present distress, and lost as soon as the storm subsides, but is abiding and expressive of the fixed bias of the soul. Nor is it the desire of the slothful, but it rouses the soul to diligence in the use of such means as afford any prospect of relief. If such as this be the desire you express, it is of itself a sufficient answer to our question, and a clear evidence of grace received. Nature never produced it; hypocrisy never felt it; the Spirit of God *alone* could give it birth. Remember, God looks at the heart; and so should you. His justice marks the iniquitous desires of the heart for punishment, and applies the guilt of actual murder to a hateful thought. And shall his mercy be less glorious, and not regard with complacency the desire of the humble, or hear the groaning of the prisoner? No doubt but heaven, with all its joys, is designed for them who thirst for Christ and his grace; for the God of salva-

tion hath said, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely;" and in many precious promises he has revealed the same free grace. If, then, you sincerely long for power against sin, as well as for the pardon of it; if you account all things loss for Christ, and from your heart desire to fear the Lord; it becomes you to credit what God has spoken, and to take the comfort which his Spirit tenders. "Hold fast, therefore, the profession of your faith without *wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised.*" In his own time he will cause you to drink abundantly of the rivers of his pleasure.—But you want the *sense* of God's pardoning mercy; you want the smiles and endearments of a reconciled Father; you want to feel the happy effects of his love, shed abroad in your heart in tender affection and strong consolations; you want to enjoy the presence of God, sensibly manifested to you in his ordinances and in your retirements; and to know your interest in his love by receiving his promises,—not as they are written, though with a pen of iron in the rock for ever, for the comfort of his people in general, but—as immediately and sweetly dropping from his lips in a sensible application to yourself. All this I wish for you, and trust you will in God's time enjoy it. But cannot we trust God's word, unless we have his smile; or acknowledge that he has wrought any thing in us, unless our affections are warmed by sensible discoveries of his love? Happy indeed is the soul who is thus favour-

ed; yet more blessed is he who hath not seen and yet hath believed. Suffer me further to reply to this language of your heart in a few particulars, which contain the best advice I can offer, to relieve your anxiety, and check, if there be any, your impatience. In taking account of your experience, carefully distinguish between what *is* and what is *not essential* in the new creature. A *hatred of all sin* and a desire to be holy, a soul enlightened to see a glory in Christ, and conformed to his image in meekness and humility; a practical choice of God as your portion, and of Christ as your Saviour; a reverent fear of God, and that kind of natural instinct which directs the heaven-born soul to flee to his arms in time of trouble and danger; a heart to desire the sincere milk of the word, and to feel when God speaks;—these are certain signs of spiritual life: these are the characteristics and the ornaments of the new creature, the gifts with which God distinguishes the children of his love. They are precious gifts, to be acknowledged with the deepest humility and the warmest gratitude. If, therefore, God has distinguished you with the Holy Spirit of promise, do not undervalue, do not be backward to acknowledge, such benefits as these, even though it be his pleasure to withhold much longer the sensible discoveries of his love, and to leave "you in heaviness through manifold temptations." God loves a humble, cheerful, grateful receiver of his benefits: perhaps, if past favours were acknowledged with

a more becoming spirit, he would give with a still more liberal hand. However, the promises of salvation are made to our faith, not to our joys.—Again, when distressed for want of sensible experience of the love of God to certify your interest in his favour, review past times, especially the kindness of your youth, and see if you cannot trace, in former experience, some expression of Divine complacency and love. Had we never seen the shining face of the sun, yet the testimony of Heaven, confirmed by the light which penetrates the interposing clouds, might have satisfied us as to his existence. But, perhaps, there was a time when you were favoured with the brighter beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and you rejoiced in his light; why then, should you not believe and cry, "He is my sun, though he refuse to shine?" Further, examine your heart, and see if there be nothing in you that might have been the occasion of Divine withdrawment: sometimes, remissness in duty; inordinate creature-love; pride, that "busy sin," which so often spoils what we perform; ingratitude; and beyond all, unbelief, or presumptuous sin, may grieve the Spirit of God, and provoke his departure. Yet many times, perhaps, these exercises may be designed to prove the grace that has been given; to try if we can trust in the name of the Lord when we walk in darkness, and wait for him when he hideth himself. However, there is no doubt but these trials, though painful, are beneficial. If the day brighten, our

comforts will be the stronger, the more sensible; or if the clouds thicken, and we are called to walk in the midst of trouble, we shall be better prepared for increased suffering. This is certain, God's ways are all judgment, and it is "if need be, we are in heaviness." Finally; revere God as a sovereign disposer of his favours, and lie at his feet as unworthy of the least of all of them. I believe we lose much by pride and impatience; we ask and have not, because we ask amiss; we ask as claimants, not as suppliants; we are ready to complain if we have not what we wish; and that, at the time we prescribe. We would presumptuouly rise on the throne of God, and direct the measures of his government, and the distribution of his favours; rather than lie at his feet as unworthy of any thing, and thankful for every thing his grace bestows. Had we more of this meek and lowly spirit, I have no doubt but God's visits would be more frequent, and his gifts more abundant. "He will beautify the meek with salvation."

These are a few reflections which the disquietude you expressed have occasioned. Should God be pleased to render them of any advantage to you, I shall be thankful. May his richest blessing ever attend you, and perfect that which concerneth you, respecting both this world and another!

P. S. Though I have written so long a letter, I know not how to withhold some further particulars of advice which have since occurred to me. If after

every expedient you can try for satisfaction, as to the reality of your love to Christ and your interest in him, you still remain distressed with doubts, bring the matter to the test by such a question as this; Could I be reconciled to part with that faint and uncertain hope I still have, and be satisfied with the best inheritance the world could afford me?—If I do not greatly mistake, such a proposal as this, seriously made, would give you reason to believe that there is a secret tie betwixt Christ and your soul, which shall not be broken. You would find yourself like a ship at anchor, though tossed with tempests, yet not driven from its hold; or you would feel and make an effort like a child in the arms of his father, who threatens and feigns to throw him from his embrace; he would cleave yet the faster to him, and cry, "My father, my father, thou art the guide of my youth! Whom have I in heaven but thee?" Once more:—If, after all, your soul is cast down within you, there is one method yet left; that is, to begin afresh the surrender of your soul to God. The door of mercy still stands open: the blood of Christ is yet sufficient to cleanse from all sin. Their soul shall live that seek God: no broken-hearted sinner, who longs for his salvation, and trembles at his word, can finally be rejected. Many times, I suppose, this has been found the readiest way to obtain comfort; but it is God's blessing which alone can render any means effectual; and while your eye and heart are towards him, there is no reason to doubt but that he will

satisfy the desire which his own Spirit has raised. Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO MR. AND MRS. R——.

THE report of your recent affliction truly grieved and wounded me. I wish I could (not heal your yet bleeding wound;—that might be an injudicious expression of friendship, and snatch from you a benefit worth worlds, but) suggest a useful hint relating to the proper management of it. When I heard that God had forbidden your creature-joys, and had called for your child, I was pained, not because you were not to minister unto her, but because I knew you would be pained, though your fostering charge were committed to an angel. But I felt passions different from grief: I knew that the Lord is good; that when he takes what poor feeble sense lets go with a very unyielding hand, he often supplies the vacancy with what is a thousand times better. I remembered that he is a God of judgment, that he does nothing without design, and that his mercy is wont to take the lead in his determinations. My expectation, therefore, was awakened by this signal to hear what God would speak, and to notice the heavenly gifts he waited to dispense. You

are young adventurers on a perilous journey; you had need to be sober minded, and feel deeply the powers of the world to come. God has been pleased to take that to himself which, I hope, will constrain your thoughts to ascend to heaven, and help to raise your affections thither too. Nothing like affliction to give energy to prayer, to constrain us into the presence of God, and to help us to pour out our hearts before him! Well, if God give you a spirit of prayer, you will not long complain of his having introduced the grant by the severest stroke you ever felt. In order to secure this blessed issue, pray to God to help you to make this dear child a free-will offering: the Lord will graciously accept a gift thus offered, and will tenderly love the Giver: draw near to him, plead with him, for the privilege which belongs to his dear children, until he smile and send the Spirit of adoption into your hearts; then will you have gladness of heart in reviewing the way wherein the Lord hath led you about and instructed you.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXVIII.

TO MRS. S——.

You will find us reduced to a small family. The scions are transplanted into different soils, and are become flourishing and fruitful. The parent stock stands alone; yet not, we hope, wholly barren. Heaven smiles upon it with refreshing influence still, causing it to bring forth some fruit, even in old age. We had gathered, in our wilderness travels, a little company around us, whose society cheered our daily toils; but they have been gradually separated in place, though not in affection. Some are in heaven; others are on their way thither. Our spirits sweetly converse with them. We trust we are in the same way, tending to one eternal home, under the same guidance, feeding on the same manna, and refreshed by the same Rock, although the communion of our bodily senses is interrupted, and we can scarcely expect to be associated in full fellowship again, until this interposing vail of flesh be rent: then will it be perfect love, expressed in sweetest endearments, capable of no abatement, liable to no interruptions, perpetually maintained by the immensity of His nature, who is love itself; perfect, celestial, eternal Love. This is a glorious hope: it were enough to reconcile us to a very dreary passage; but, blessed be our gracious Leader, he is often giving us a song,

even in a strange land, charging faith and hope with a cluster of Canaan's vintage: and if at any time sorrows and cares are abundant, yet our consolations do much more abound. Still we are encouraged to "go in the strength of the Lord God:" his rod and his staff they comfort us: his power and grace are still the same; and encourage us with confidence to say, The Lord is my helper. May you find him every day, in every duty, and amidst all your cares, present with you! Truly he giveth power to the faint: he helpeth the helpless: he will not break the bruised reed. Creature-enjoyments yield a more abundant sweetness in his smile; and amidst the failure of the fairest earthly comforts, his favour is life. Oh, let our souls follow hard after him, and never rest until clouds and darkness, sins and sorrows, shall be all lost in the full manifestation of Divine Love!

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XXXIX.

TO MRS. S——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHAT a mercy it is to be a sincere and devout inquirer after God: while many are perplexed in the labyrinth wherein Satan has endeavoured to

involve God's truth and ways, to hear the voice of the great Prophet, and to be taught of him as the truth is in Jesus; in his light to see light, and to find in Him a sure directory to heaven! What a mercy to know the Lord; to be delivered from the face of the covering that is cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations; to have an understanding given us to know him that is true; to know him as ours, our Saviour, our Father, our God! What all-sufficiency, what fulness of joy is opened to us in the revelation which his Spirit gives! We may value creatures and ordinances, as the medium through which the infinite Jehovah transmits the beams of his love. But though the candlestick were taken out of its place, and the ties of the most endeared friendship broken, yet in the vision of the Father of lights, we need fear no evil: we may rest on his truth, and say, "All my springs are *in thee*." You, my friend, know, being justified by faith, what it is to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; what the answer of a good conscience through the blood of Jesus is, and what the seal of the Holy Spirit of promise means. O it is great peace: it passeth all understanding! All the treasures, and pleasures, and glory of the world, are dross and dung in comparison of it. Ah! what are these to a wretched sinner, under the arrest of wrathful Justice? or what are they to a joyful believer, who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart; who bows at the feet of Infinite

Majesty, and by the Spirit of adoption cries, "Abba, Father!" who hears that gladdening assurance, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love!" May you, my friend, ever enjoy a solid persuasion, on scriptural grounds, of God's pardoning mercy! May your will be resigned, in filial subjection, to the will of God concerning you! Satisfied that He doth all things well, may you come daily to God as your exceeding joy; and while the glory of the world is passing away, let your song be, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God!" May you, with your soul resting on his promise as the faithful staff of your pilgrimage, press through the wilderness, and at last, holding fast the profession of your faith without wavering, pass over Jordan! We have reason to deplore the state of many, whose peace arises from ignorance and inconsideration: the strong man armed, for a time, keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace; but it is an unfounded and delusive peace: it vanishes before the light; it cannot abide the brightness of Christ's coming, either as a Saviour or as a Judge. But when "He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Many will attempt it: the lion with dreadful roar; the serpent with his crafty wiles; the frowning or fawning world; the evil heart of unbelief, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. But though myriads of enemies should wish to make trouble, if He be near who justifies us, if God command peace, who worketh all things after the

counsel of his own will; if the power of Christ rest upon us, envy shall rage in vain: we may proclaim to all around, Our God is in the heavens; he hath done, and he will do, whatsoever *he will.* "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." What enjoyment like this is to be found on the highest pinnacle of earthly felicity? Has the world a favourite that can challenge the universe, and presume to say, "Who shall trouble me?" Alas! conscience ere long will trouble him, which now slumbers within his own breast. There are dire diseases, too, inherent in his frame, which, at the summons of Heaven, would effectually silence his proud boasting. Death will soon trouble him; and awful Eternity, with the dreadful cup of God's treasured wrath, will produce trembling, horror, and despair, for ever and for ever. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." Of how many, whose situation is regarded even as enviable, may it be said, "The way of peace have they not known." You and I are in the wilderness as well as they: we are travelling, too, in a land of drought, a trackless waste, amidst thorns, and briers, and pits, and savage beasts of prey, and darkness and death; yet, blessed be God, not without a guide, a sure defence, a tried promise, and provisions that can never fail. O the riches of the grace of God! What wretched vagrants are the world's chief favourites, exposed to eternal evils, and perishing with want: while an Israelite indeed, however outwardly

poor and despised of the world, yet, in reference to his hidden life, travels in a style incomparably surpassing all the glory of the world! His is a royal chariot, paved with love; his guards are shining angels. The heavens drop down bread for him, more delicious than that which angels eat: he drinks honey out of the rock, and oil of the flinty rock. He follows in the army of the Eternal God, in the rear of patriarchs and prophets, and apostles and martyrs, and the spirits of just men made perfect: he is travelling with faith and flaming zeal towards heaven. Glorious is that faith, which bears his soul above desponding fear, while pressing to reach the heavenly goal, and longing to be there. Surely it becomes Zion's travellers to indulge a grateful frame: "Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord." Sing you too, my friend, and let Grace be your song; Grace, whether thy heavenly Father appear to smile or to frown; Grace in its gifts, and in its bereavements; in its promises, and in its prospects: and sing thou too, my soul, and with grateful, thankful ardour, say continually, Let the Lord be magnified! A few conflicts more, and our harps shall be tuned to louder and sweeter songs; and in perfect harmony with that multitude which no man can number, we shall sing of that love which here can never be told.

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XL.

TO MRS. S——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE rejoiced, and I do rejoice, in your experience of the tender mercy of a covenant God. You have had your griefs, but you have found consolations too. Your burden has been heavy, but God has put strength in you. You have been in the field of conflict, but you have not been overcome. You have been tried, but not rejected, and I trust you can say, that the Spirit of God, in the prevalence of light, life, and love in your soul, beareth witness with your Spirit, when you say, "It is *good* for me that I have been afflicted." It is, indeed, good, even to be separated from the most lovely and endeared earthly friends, if that loss be repaired by an increased knowledge of the love of Christ. It is good to be emptied of all that is excellent in the creature, if, as the blessed effect, we are filled with all the fulness of God. Who would not bless the hand of a Saviour, that should put clay on his eyes, and seal them up from the view of the dearest creature-delights, nay though he should seal them up in *death*, if it were to open them in the vision of the glory of God? Our improved acquaintance and fellowship with God, and conformity to him, is his gra-

cious design in all his dispensations. He has been passing by you, in dispensations peculiarly instructive and quickening. He has been calling unto you to come near, to come much nearer, to hear his voice, to feel his power, to taste his love, to see more of his purpose and of his heart, and to enjoy more intimate and endeared fellowship with him. You can now, I trust, stand still, and see, in thankful review, the salvation of God. You had never known so much of God: you had never found such sweetness in his word: you had never poured out your soul before him with such humility, with such wrestling importunity, had never cleaved to him with such longing desire, nor received such condescending visits from him, had he not brought you into the wilderness, and placed you in mournful solitude. While I condole, then, your loss as now left alone, it must be your joy and my joy that the *Father is with you.* "Thy Maker is thy Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name:" his grace, his condescension, his love, his wisdom, his power, his truth, are all unchangeable and infinite. Resign yourself, then, to his conduct, give him your confidence, and give him your heart. Practically yield yourself to him, and seek your all in him. Estimate your advantage or your loss, not by what of the creature, but by what of God you possess and enjoy. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart. Commit thy way also unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." O! it is a

mercy to have a mind made willing to choose so good a part, to walk in such company, to drink at such a fountain, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God! What a mercy to be drawn by endearing smiles, and exceeding great and precious promises, to intimate fellowship with such a God. Nay, what a mercy to be driven by frowns, and distressful storms, into such a hiding place! Indeed, this best of friends is best known in adversity. His kindest visits, his most gracious smiles, and his largest bestowments, are granted to his people, when destitute and afflicted. With him "the fatherless findeth mercy." Times of severe trial seem to be coming on the Church of Christ in this country. The storm is gathering. Nothing but the power of God can prevent the bursting of the cloud; but his arm is not shortened, nor his ear heavy. O! for the spirit of prayer; for interceding Abrahams and wrestling Jacobs! I trust, we have yet many of them. I hope, if a sifting time should come, there will be much corn found among the chaff. However severe the conflict, there shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. A little time will reveal with more certainty the will of God respecting these things. Let us sing "Jehovah Jireh: in the mount it shall be seen."

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLI.

TO MRS. S——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is, indeed, my delight to hold communion with the people of God, and especially to lead mourners in Zion to those wells of salvation whence the Spirit of Grace has enabled me to derive seasonable comfort and relief. When I review the circumstances of your trial, I see enough to awaken every tender sentiment; yet assuredly there is such a discovery of the fatherly kindness and mercy of God to you, as calls for heartfelt gratitude, and encourages very lively and enlarged expectation. From the sanctified loss of one endeared earthly comfort, you first found a place among God's dear children. O! blessed necessity which makes us let earth go, that we may lay hold of heaven! It is great mercy to wound the heart, in order that it may be healed with consolations so divine. Perhaps you might have regarded this as a signal, that the richest blessings of your future life, the richest manifestations of the love of God, were to be conveyed to you through the medium of affliction. However, you have hitherto found it so: you have now been called to resign your most endeared earthly comfort. Nature started back, struggled, and would have declined

the surrender. But faith reminded you that *He* called for it who gave it, who gave himself for you, and has given himself unto you; that *He* called for it, unto whom you had vowed the surrender of all you are, and of all you have; and who knew, infinitely better than yourself, how to perform all things, so as to secure the best interest of your soul. Faith reminded you, that he would make all grace abound towards you, and do for you exceeding abundantly beyond all you can ask or think. Faith prevailed: you laid your Isaac on the altar, though with a trembling heart, crying, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt!" And now, what says your judgment? Great as the sacrifice is, is it too great for God, your Redeemer, to expect? What says your experience? Solitary and gloomy, in outward respects, as the vale of conflict has been, has God, indeed, forgotten to be gracious? Rather, have you not reason to record the condescension and tender mercy, with which he has relieved your cares, and sustained and cheered your burthened spirit? Your strongest tie to earth is dissolved, but you have more intimate communion with Heaven. You come to God with more of a praying heart: your soul waiteth upon God with more earnest expectation, and you lean upon him with more child-like dependence. You go to God with a heart more emptied of earth; and you cry, with increased fervour, "O God, thou art my God!" You more sensibly feel your need of him: your soul followeth hard after him; and

you have been kept from despondency and overwhelming grief, because his right hand upheld you. Never, perhaps, had you been brought so near to God, in the life of faith, nor have known so much of the sweetness of his promises, and the condescension of his grace, if he had not brought you into such deep adversity, and made the world a wilderness unto you. But now you find in the fountain much more, since the streams have failed to give. In your solitary path your cheered spirit cries, "O my God, I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were!" Well, be it so. With such a fountain near, you cannot want. Leaning on the arm of such a friend, and encouraged by his gracious words, you will feel your strength renewed. Experience will feed your faith, and furnish you with many a song in this house of your pilgrimage. Why does God so often disappoint our expectations from the creature, but that he may bring us nearer to himself; that our hearts may rest in him, that we may practically be what we profess, and that we may find in our sweet experience what God has promised? May your soul, cleaving, with yet stronger affection and faith, to God, sweetly resigned to his will, find increasing reason to sing of judgment and of mercy! Your mind will solace itself in the thought of Heaven, of your dear departed friends there, of perfect rest there, of communion with Jesus there. O blessed interview!

His own soft hand shall wipe the tears
From every weeping eye,
And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,
And death itself shall die.

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLII.

TO MRS. D——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE concern I have felt, relating to the uncomfortable state of your mind, constrains me to seize the earliest opportunity of replying to your statement. Your mind, I perceive, feels perplexed, disappointed, and discouraged, while viewing the dealings of God with you. You have not been favoured with those manifestations of the love of God which would have furnished the evidence and comfort you want: you are called to walk in darkness, yet are not solitary: you may hear on every hand, the moans of God's children in the like situation; nay, and there is the voice of their Leader and yours, with strong crying and tears, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Yet amidst the extreme horrors of this darkness, there is found a resting place: God is just and wise, faithful and good. "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest

the praises of Israel!" God's tried people exchange their moans and tears for songs and joys, as fast as the book of God's procedure opens before them. At present, you are at a loss to explain God's dealings with you: they are not answerable to your expectations, and you scarcely think them to be in harmony with his own promises: then let us look into the word of promise, and inquire if it be not the word of truth. I know none more to the point, or more precious than that in Psal. xxxvii. 1, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart." The desire of your heart is, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me!" Yet in vain you pray and look up. It is possible you are expecting what God's truth in this promise is not engaged to give: look again into the qualifications stated in the former clause, "Delight thyself in the Lord:" It seems to import, Let the desire and delight of thy soul center in the Lord; let his image, his spirit, his love, be thine "all in all;" and thou shalt suffer no final disappointment: thy largest desires shall be fulfilled. I gather from the promise, that they enjoy most of God, who have the purest and most undivided love to him; and on the other hand, that many mourn the want of the manifestation of love, because of something that needs to be corrected in them. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." The child who loves, and is dearly beloved of its parent, has in some respect offended; and his temper is not

fully subdued: yet grieving and sobbing, he implores the renewal of his parent's caresses. Perhaps the parent's fond affection would be gratified in an immediate compliance; but his wiser love consults the forming the mind of his child to a happier temper. He wishes him to be less self-willed and fretful, and more satisfied with the will of his parents; therefore, for the present, he denies himself in denying his child. Now review the dispensation you have been under. That God, whose you are, who is your Redeemer, your Benefactor, your Father,—who has aboundedtowards you in the blessings of hisprovidence and grace, and has reserved for you treasures of everlasting glory,—called for a sacrifice, and, though one of the fairest flowers in your garden, he had reason to expect it to be on your part a free-will offering. He meant to receive your dear child, to be with him where he is, to behold his glory; and to recompense your gift with so much of himself and of his Spirit as should exceed its value an hundred fold more, even in this life; and withal there was so much love in the manner of his embracing and kissing the offering away, that it might have been expected you would have felt as the disciples did when they had witnessed the glorious ascension of their Master: "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God." I am very far from meaning to censure you. I have to lament my own infirmities, and therefore can be touched with the feeling of yours; and so

can, and so will, that great High Priest, who is able to do for you exceeding abundantly beyond all you can ask or think; but my advice is, Let your first and most important request be, that your heart may be emptied of earth, of self, of sin, and be filled with the Spirit of God, and directed into his love. You will now see, that your affection was, in an undue manner, lodged in this earthen vessel: it will be your wisdom and blessedness to say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" And when your tears are wiped away, and your soul with sweet complacency cries, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" his love will be no longer restrained: it will open many springs of rich consolation, and you will entertain many a message of your Father's love, and eat angels' food. God will pour his Spirit on you, and give you great peace within: he will shew you that his heart is love, and that he hath done all things well.

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLIII.

TO MRS. W——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THOUGH I could not address you by letter so soon as I wished, my mind with much tender affection

has often been with you. But now, reviewing the alarm, the shock, the agony of distress you must have suffered, the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the storm, that have torn up the cedar of your lot, you will be able, my friend, I hope, to indulge with me in calm reflection. Your mind will be composed, and your ear open, to listen to the still small voice of God's paternal mercy and love. Truly, you have borne the yoke of affliction from your youth. I trust it will be found to have been good for you. You had scarcely entered on the world, before you found it to be a wilderness: a cloud was drawn over your flattering prospects, and when, with eager desire, you tasted the first spring that promised delight, you found the water, Marah, bitter. Have you proved the efficacy of the cross of Christ? Have you cast that tree into the fountain of these waters? Can you proclaim the virtue of the blood of sprinkling to sanctify your sorrow, and cleanse your heart? Had I looked only, or chiefly, to things that are seen, I should ever have regarded yours as a hard lot: for peace, you have had great bitterness: but God, whose ways are all judgment, chose your lot, and appointed you to much labour and sorrow. Perhaps, in love to your soul, he did this: he saw that an earthly paradise, with all the sensual ease and delight it would afford, would give the old serpent too much advantage over you: he saw that you needed restraining and preventing mercy, and he would not suffer you to be tempted above what you were able to bear. He saw, that if

earth presented little else to you but thorns and briers, you would then think of seeking a better country, and inquire, with a determined mind, the way to it. Therefore, he prepared for you a bitter cup: a wholesome medicine, I trust, it has proved. He who hears the sighing of the prisoners, perhaps has often witnessed the sorrows and prayers of your oppressed soul. Many times have I entertained a lively persuasion that God was preparing the way for the manifestation of himself in your salvation. Shall I hope that your cries for deliverance are now louder than ever? Then hear what God the Lord will speak. He is nigh to them who are of a broken heart: he will, by his gracious and powerful word, revive the spirit of the humble. "Your soul shall live that seek God." You will seek him and find him. Thy Maker will be thy Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his Name: his arm will sustain you, his servants will serve you, his treasures will enrich you: Himself will be your exceeding joy, and the love of his heart will flow to you in a thousand channels; sweetening your creature-enjoyments, and sanctifying your sorrows. Make him your all in all: He will leave no want unsupplied, no care unrelieved: he will cast your sins behind his back, nay, even into the boundless bottomless sea of Jesus' blood: he will give you the spirit of adoption, the pledge of everlasting love. My dear friend, I long to know whether your soul be brought near to God; whether you deeply, and in every view, feel your need of

him, and love him, and seek him, and long to enjoy him, in his word and ordinances, in secret, and in social duties. Oh! this is the way of peace: it is the one thing needful; it is needful for yourself; it is needful for your tender charge. No Father so loving and so powerful, as our Father who is in heaven: he would be a sanctuary to your dear babes. No Shepherd so gracious, as the great Shepherd of souls: he would gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom. Oh! seek him, and he will be found of you; seek him, until he shall have sweetly said to your soul, "I am thy salvation!" Then my heart shall rejoice with yours, and your joy no one shall take from you. With tender affection, my dear young friend,

I am, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLIV.

TO MRS. W——.

I HAVE had repeated hints, my dear friend, of your bodily indisposition, and though I am far removed from you, and have not the particular knowledge of your case that I could wish, I feel great solicitude, and would wish to minister something by which the God of consolation may be pleased to strengthen the hands that hang down. If there be any apparent uncertainty as to the issue of this

visitation, I know that you would feel the burden of care much increased by your tender anxiety as a parent. May the Lord, that healeth graciously, visit you with his salvation, and long continue to communicate the rich bestowments of his fatherly love to your dear children! However, his will is holy, just, and good: it depends not on second causes; the Lord of Hosts knows how to supply the failure of instruments. It is enough to have the eternal word of the eternal God, though every other support give way; especially to have that word received, embraced, and bound to our heart, as our choicest cordial, the pillar of our confidence and our joy. He hath said, in accents the most gracious, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." The promise is unto you, and unto your children. Have you not times of solemn devotion in remembrance, wherein you have, in a personal and parental regard, taken hold of the promise, and of the strength of the Lord in the promise? Have you not an inward testimony to the integrity of your heart, in walking before the Lord? And have you not known some seasons of special endearment, wherein you have been brought near to God, have been enabled to adopt the free address of a child, to plead the promise, to lean upon it, and have found rest to your soul? Though in a general review you have much infirmity, and darkness, and deadness to complain of, yet, perhaps, you can trace at some seasons such discoveries of light, and life, and love,

as prove the reality of the grace of Christ in you, though not in the sensible manner you could wish. That blessed Redeemer's time, I trust, is now come, or coming, for the brighter manifestations of his love. He hath not brought you into the wilderness without a gracious purpose. Look up to him, though with tears and penitent supplication; look up with faith and hope. With his promise in your heart, represent to him your frailty, your fear, and trembling; your insufficiency as a broken reed to sustain the burden you are called to bear. Cry to him, "Lord, help me! let thy promise revive my hope, confirm my faith, and distil in refreshing dews on my soul." My dear cousin, I trust there is a design of special mercy in this visitation. "The Lord is good; a strong hold in the time of trouble, and blessed are all they who trust in him." When he intends the most gracious visits, he often comes in clouds and darkness. "Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." Oh! how great are his mercies! how sweet, how strong his consolations, when he reveals the light of his countenance! Amidst the night of affliction, the heaviest burden, then, no longer is oppressive; the mind becomes tranquil amidst stormy care. You, my dear, though a feeble reed, bruised by many sorrows, when he reveals himself, will want neither strength nor courage: you will cast your burden upon the Lord, you will lean upon his arm, and rest upon

his truth, and feel a blest repose, while you say, "Here am I, let him do with me as seemeth good unto him." I trust his will is your recovery; but I know it is more than that; it is your sanctification; and is not this enough? This, with an entail of rich blessings on your dear children! Oh! seek the Lord! call upon him, plead with him, think affectionately and thankfully of him, and wait for him. I have witnessed so much, in several instances, very lately, of his tender mercy, in times of affliction, that I feel encouraged, when clouds arise, to expect some special manifestation of the power and grace of God. The Lord be with you, and cause his face to shine upon you! Were it his pleasure, I should rejoice, as his messenger, to prepare his way before him; but if you seek him, he will be found of you.

I am, my dear cousin,

&c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLV.

TO MRS. L——.

My heart rejoices, my dear Madam, while I write, to think that you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May you know more and more!

Every cloud of distressful doubt and fear will, in the Lord's own time, flee before the brightness of his appearing. We want to converse more with him in his word, to trace the wondrous steps of his humiliation,—to contemplate his love,—to see the fountain flowing,—to have the testimony of those that have proved its efficacy,—to fix our eye on that living, that precious Corner-stone, which God has laid in Zion,—and to feed upon those promises wherein God has provided for the strong consolation of those who flee to him under distressful alarm. We want, very attentively and minutely, to observe the conduct of his providence respecting us, to see his hand and bow to his will in all that concerns us; and we want more immediate fellowship with his people, to be conversant with their hopes and fears, their griefs and conflicts. It is good for us to come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and in the light of truth to realize the victory, and the personal perfections, and the sources of unmeasurable joy they have attained to—the light that shines upon them. You will, Madam, I trust, find internal evidence prevail, and faith strengthen, while, through such mediums as these, you behold the glory of the Lord. This fountain we need daily to wash in; this foundation we need be continually coming to: it is a living foundation; and if we truly rest upon it, it will make us lively stones. This bread must be our daily food; this fire of Divine love must warm our frozen hearts. I wish, Madam, that

the bread on the table of the Lord, in his sanctuary, were with you more abundant; that the sacred lamp were seen to burn with a stronger flame; and that the fire on the altar were found effectual to inflame every sacrifice you present. I trust you are fed, and sometimes quickened and warmed, under the ministry of good Mr. N——. I have no doubt but sometimes, by the enlivening power of Divine faith in your own mind, you conclude that a coal from the altar has touched his lips. May the blessing be found more and more abundant! But what shall we say of the other place? Is the Spirit of Christ there? Can candour itself, in the review of facts, and influenced by Divine love, admit it is so? There cannot remain a question but it is otherwise. While, therefore, I feel interested in what relates to the honour of Him whose wondrous love has, I trust, for ever bound my heart to him, I cannot cautiously shrink back from known duty, from a fear of incurring censure. My Lord made an entire sacrifice of his good Name in the cause of my salvation, and he remembers what I have often vowed. There truly is no service within my power that I would withhold, no hazard that I would decline, if I could be in any degree instrumental in removing the evil I so much deplore. I am apprized of your peculiar situation. You are encompassed with restraints and impediments: perhaps others have theirs. But what are these before a sense of duty and the love of Christ? Feeble as Sampson's

cords when the Spirit of God came upon him. However, every endeavour should be employed to unite the friends of the Gospel, and, if possible, to enliven their zeal and add to their number. I hope, however, that they cannot bear them that are evil. O that their united addresses could be often ascending to God! This especially would be a token of good. I hope much of this incense is daily ascending from their closets, and truly I should rejoice with them, should I be favoured to see the return of prayer in this respect. The hints I have dropped, as far as I know my own heart, have been impelled by love to Christ and to his cause; and as truly by endeared affection to my friend.

I am, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLVI.

TO MISS ——.

I THANK you, my dear friend, for the favour of your letter. The unreserved communication of your sentiments and feelings relating to these great subjects, as it may in itself be relieving to your mind, so it will conduce to what is my Master's pleasure and my own. With respect to those peculiar doctrines to which you refer, my request is, that

you will do all you can to divert your regards from them. They are secret things, and belong to God, not, at present, to you. They furnish no rule of duty: nor is the way of your peace and comfort, at this time, to be found in them. It is a device of the great adversary, to harass your oppressed mind with questions concerning them. Were your bodily health declining, you would not direct your anxious inquiry to the impenetrable volume of God's decrees, to know whether a long life or a short life were appointed you. A proper regard to duty and interest would lead you to take other measures. Only be assured of this, my dear Madam, you had never chosen God, with cordial affection, to be your chief good, had not God first and most graciously chosen you; therefore, if it be your heart's desire and prayer to be reconciled to him in Christ Jesus, and to be sanctified to serve, and honour, and enjoy him as your God, you may rest persuaded that God's heart is towards you, and "then shall you know if you follow on to know the Lord." You mention the duty of self-examination. It is a great, an advantageous, and a necessary duty. Yet some cautions and directions demand attention. I regard your mind as under a cloud; your frame and feelings will be against you; take heed of drawing conclusions from apprehensions that will too easily and too often press on your imagination. Make your appeal from affection and feeling to sober judgment; and in seasons wherein your mind is most composed, you will herein find advantage.

Another caution I would suggest is this: expect not too much. I mean, when you engage in the duty of self-examination: rather let the inquiry be, Is it the desire of my soul to give up myself in solemn covenant unto the Lord, and to have his promise fulfilled in his great work wrought in me? Then am I the Lord's, and is my heart under the power of renewing grace? The latter may issue in fear, the former in hope. The Bible is your directory in this great duty. Two facts especially interesting and important the Spirit of God in the Bible represents to us; our own state of sin and misery by nature, and the wonderful remedy which his love has provided for us in Jesus Christ. The whole Scripture abounds with references to the fallen, depraved, guilty, helpless state of man. The awful fact is manifest in his understanding, his will, and affections. The estrangedness of his heart from God, the debased state of his mind, and his proneness, without exception, to that which is evil, are testimonies not to be reasonably disputed. The provisions of the Old Testament, represented in promises, prophecies, and types, concur with that astonishing grace and truth which came by Christ Jesus, to render the demonstration more complete. Examine yourself in regard to this very serious subject; be not afraid to know yourself, and though you see yourself a miserable sinner, and your heart a corrupt fountain, you will have no reason to entertain one desponding apprehension. It is the Comforter, the promised Comforter, who

convinces of sin; and this is the way he takes to introduce and to endear Jesus, the Saviour, the Friend. None but a broken, a contrite heart, will open to receive him. You, my dear friend, while, with the word of God in your hand, you search and examine your own heart, will justify these representations; and the more you see of the character and grace of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel, the more you will be abased in your own sight: you will be ashamed, yea, even confounded: you will see, that if ever you are saved, it must be of free and sovereign grace. Yes, my dear Madam, the grace of God in Christ, is in every view sovereign grace; and in its overtures, it is not only free, but importunate. Your heart, under the most painful conviction of sin and of the need of salvation, does not, cannot, long more earnestly for the grace that is in Christ Jesus, than he waits and longs to be gracious to you. Then, while by the light of the word you study your own heart, and find there is no help in you; contemplate the amazing, the infinite grace of God, in Christ crucified, in Christ preached unto the Gentiles, in Christ knocking at the door of a sinner's heart, importunate to enrich him with all the blessings of salvation. Precious Saviour! Pray for his Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto you. You will want no exhortation to love him, to trust in him, to rejoice in him; you will cast yourself at his feet, as his willing servant, and bless the providence, however distressful, that led to your in-

quiring after him. I trust you will find herein the way of relief. The Lord grant you power to sustain your sinking mind, and to receive the strong consolations that are in Christ Jesus!

I am, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLVII.

TO MISS B——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

On account of Mrs. L——'s afflicted state, it falls to the lot of a stranger to acknowledge the favour of your affectionate letter: a stranger in outward respects, but not so, we trust, in regard to Him, in whom the whole family in heaven and earth are named. "Unknown, yet well known;" by rich grace a member of comparatively long standing in the highly privileged society into which Miss M—B— has, it seems, gained a recent admission. This is my warrant for such an address as affection should dictate; and for assuring you, as my friend, how my heart rejoices in the discovery you have found—found, I am well assured, when it was unsought! Eternal praises to the God of Salvation for the change of state and the change of mind; and, as the happy consequence, the change of taste and company, of masters and employments, of cares

and griefs, of enjoyments and prospects you have experienced! and you have to expect that He, who has shewn you great mercy, will do yet more, much more, in you, and for you; will sanctify your understanding to more delightful apprehensions, your affections to more pure and heavenly delights, and your will to perfect "singleness of heart, serving the Lord:" that he will, by conflict, give you victory; by pain, pleasure; by afflictive doubts and alarms confirm your faith; by abasing infirmity improve your sanctification; and, perhaps, by distressful withdrawments, direct your heart more than ever into his love. Only stand to your solemn engagement, seek him in his appointed way, go your way by the footsteps of his flock, prize his ordinances, live upon his promises, record his signal appearances; and he will cause you to "inherit substance;" he will feast you with the hidden manna, he will delight you with heavenly friendships, and recompense every sacrifice you make in his cause a hundred fold, and will himself be all in all to you, when every creature-joy shall be entirely and for ever extinguished. In respect to our friend, Mrs. L—, her case, in outward respects, is pitiable in a very great degree. Bodily afflictions prevail, so as to allow of very little repose by night, or relief by day. With this, thick darkness and distress often produce an agony. All sensible comfort is fled; yet, though to herself unknown, everlasting consolation is treasured up for her behind the cloud. The desire of her soul is to him

who will not always chide, nor break the bruised reed; for "though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion." Friendly converse affords her some occasional relief; but the burden quickly returns, and is, beyond expression, oppressive. We are now waiting for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning. Miss B—— will mingle her prayers and cries with those of many; and he who shall come, will come, in his well chosen time, and will not tarry. Our dear Mrs. L——'s hand and arm being greatly enlarged, and in much pain, she is disabled from writing; but it will afford her pleasure to receive a letter.

I am, my dear young friend,

Your's, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLVIII.

TO MISS B——.

I HAVE, my friend, on the part of the afflicted Mrs. L——, to acknowledge your favour. It contains truths, precious, consolatory, and appropriate. It was received by Mrs. L— with affection, and, as far as her judgment was concerned, with approbation and esteem; but the still small voice of reason, even while accompanied with the testimony of Scripture, is of little avail at present.

The imagination, overspread with thick darkness, attended with the earthquake and whirlwind, can perceive nothing but gloom, bitterness, and horror. Hence, the utmost we can do or hope for at present, is, by a close and firm appeal to Scripture and reason, to reduce the agony and produce something like a transient calm. It is distressful to be habitually conversant with such a scene: but the anguish of a mind, which is the seat of such darkness, is not to be expressed: yet it is manifest there is *grace*, though its resistance is feeble. There is light which discovers in Christ Jesus an excellency that transcends every thing else. There is love, which the floods of these many waters cannot quench. Sometimes we apprehend that a very short time may close this affecting scene; but life may be prolonged beyond expectation—mercifully prolonged—that we all may be favoured with a testimony of the Saviour's love, in some lucid interval, before mortality ceases to detain its captive. And now, what shall I say to you, my friend, how congratulate your happy lot, and glorify the grace of God in you! to be restored from thoughtless wanderings to God; to have passed from death to life; to be taught of God to cry, "Abba, Father!" to be put among his dear children, and to be entertained with the privileges and prospects belonging to such a relation; to be distinguished by such grace in a vain and ungodly world, and that entirely unmerited, unasked, and unsought; what rich, what un-

bounded love is here! I cannot wonder, my friend, that you should have much to say of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that his love should constrain you to render to him active service. The change in you is manifestly, what in all instances it is really, *his own work*—through which you are made a part of that spiritual building, of which he shall bear the glory for ever—a *lively stone*, because united *to*, built, and still bearing upon, a living foundation. "Christ is all." Whatever light, or life, or strength, or comfort, you have, is from him; and whatever of righteousness you need is in him, and it is "on all them that believe." God beholds with complacency nothing but *Christ in us*. The word and ordinances,—creature-friendships,—the good things of this world,—Providential dispensations,—are then blessings indeed to us, when they are vehicles of the spirit and grace of Christ. Those are the best seasons, the best sermons, the best friends and friendly interviews, wherein there is most of the sweet savour of his Name! What an advantage is this plant in any soil! Whatever our lot in life, what rest, what sweetness it affords! What a mercy to have this grace flowing through so many channels! Such a channel was the Christian minister, by whose converse and counsels your mind was first relieved; and while it gives me concern to find you have not a Gospel ministry regularly to attend on, I rejoice to know that the river, that maketh glad the city of our God, never fails a soul thirsting for the waters of life, because means of

communication are wanting. The Chief Shepherd feeds his flock on the high mountains of Israel. If his pasture be short, his blessing will make it rich. I doubt not but you will improve, with care, the means you have. Hear the Gospel as often as you can; pray much, and watch your heart in prayer; read and study the word of God: let it be to you the grand reservoir of the Spirit of Christ: you have, probably, other good books; they will be helpful. I am glad you have surmounted opposition, and established a Sunday School: it is a useful measure. Whenever you feel at liberty to write, I shall be happy in offering any thing that may tend to strengthen your heart and hands in the Lord.

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER XLIX.

TO LADY S——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE freedom with which you wrote obliges me. I can truly weep with you who weep; yet I do rejoice, and will rejoice, in the mercy that has led you to regard sin as your greatest burden. Indeed, the evil you lament is universal; yet few deplore it, because they have "their understanding darkened." It is the light that maketh manifest. Increasing

bounded love is here! [illegible] more, much more, of that you should h[illegible] [illegible]den in your heart. Sin Lord Jesus Chri[illegible] [illegible] courage, my friend; grace you to render [illegible] [illegible]und. God has, I trust, given you is man[illegible] [illegible] into Canaan; and it is the Land own work [illegible] your inheritance is before you, but spiritu[illegible] [illegible]erit by conquest—the conquest of an ever- [illegible] is vigilant and crafty, and strongly in- ber [illegible] and possessed of every advantage that long [illegible]ce and experience can give—an enemy that [illegible]employ a thousand artifices to put you off your [illegible]rd, and will be ever ready to take advantage of your negligence or your cowardice—a truly formidable enemy, most advantageously posted: "not principalities and powers" only, but "spiritual wickednesses in high places" are your enemies. Sometimes you will be surprised to see how greatly, and from what unexpected quarters, the foe is reinforced, while, with a trembling heart, you sigh and say, "How are they increased that trouble me!" Perhaps you will be driven at times almost to the miserable resolve of the Israelites, on the report of the spies, "Let us make us a captain, and let us return into Egypt:" yet "let not your heart be troubled." It is my joy to address you as a servant of Jesus; and, regarding the subject in a general view (that you may be stedfast and unmoveable, and be prepared to meet the enemy in every form and at all times), I wish your mind to be charged with this one sentiment,—the battle is not yours, but the Lord's. The Eter-

God has pledged his truth to give to every believer the full possession of heaven and glory. When he called Abraham, and when he called you, he said, "I am God Almighty: walk before me, and be thou perfect." And believe it, my friend, "there is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens for thy help, and in his excellency on the sky." "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms;" and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and say, "destroy them." "He giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength." Then "set the Lord always before you;" "go in the strength of the Lord God," and your heart *need* not, *will* not, be afraid. Your worst enemy, yea, the only enemy you have to fear, is an "evil heart of unbelief." Watch and resist its every motion; "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering," and your courage and your strength will daily increase; you will aspire after new conquests, you will be prepared for the most arduous encounters, you will find "all things are possible to him that believeth;" you will upbraid every rising fear, and say, with the valiant Caleb, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for, with Jehovah at our head, we are well able to overcome it." You will never rest until your victory shall be complete, and you have fully received the promise. But you complain of a particular evil,—sin in your imagination; and you wish to know "by what means it may be resisted and

overcome." Though I dare not promise an easy, or speedy deliverance, yet some advantage, I hope, you may derive from an attention to the following hints:—

First, Endeavour to impress your mind more deeply with an affecting sense of the guilt and turpitude of this evil. You do deplore it; but I trust you will see, in a still stronger light, how hateful and injurious it is, and deplore it still more. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite spirit, O God! thou wilt not despise." Do not think lightly of it, because it does not expose you to the censure of fellow-creatures. Let nominal professors be content with a fair outward appearance. I trust *you* will ever hate sin in its very nature, and deeply feel those symptoms of its prevalence, from which your reputation can suffer no injury. Indeed, many an aggravating circumstance may pertain to sin, when exposed to public view; yet it is the concurrence of the mind and will in sin, that especially constitutes its malignity. To the mind it belongs to restrain and controul the evil propensities and passions of animal nature. Guilt, therefore, is highly aggravated, when the mind lets go the reins, and becomes a party in these disorders, conscious of its guilt. That man is regarded with commiseration who did it ignorantly, or who was surprised by temptation: but sin, harboured in the soul, and deliberately, though secretly, *acted* there, has a tenfold malignity. The Apostle seems

to speak of it as the very worst,—as the extreme of evil in sin, when even "the mind and conscience are defiled." Shall my God witness in me a heart that indulges in iniquity? Shall he see me continue in sin, and cherish his implacable enemy in my bosom? No. I would scorn and deprecate so base a conduct, and will pray, with David, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

Secondly, Enter into a very serious consideration of what God is, and of your relation to him;—how holy a God he is: "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity:" He cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence; nor can the thickest vail of darkness hide it from his view. And shall I, a feeble worm, the creature of his power, the child of his care, indulge iniquity in my heart? Shall he have to complain of me, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified?" Shall the author of my being, and the God of my mercies, see me resisting his will, grieving his Spirit, profaning his temple, and prostituting my faculties to the basest servitude? God forbid! Yea, forbid it, O my soul, with all thy powers!

Thirdly, Often view the iniquity of your heart in the light of God's holy and righteous law. "The law was added because of transgression;" to search out iniquity, to strip it of every false disguise, to expose it in all its hatefulness and

deformity; to silence every plea of a deceitful heart, and to charge guilt home upon the conscience. This was the design of our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount: it was to deliver the Moral Law from the false glosses of the Jewish Doctors, to represent its spiritual nature, and the respect it has to the heart. There you will see that the thought of evil is sin; that the commandment is violated, not by the outward act only, but by the inward intent and emotion of the mind. Upon this discovery of the spirituality of the law, St. Paul was effectually roused from his security: the pride of his heart received an effectual check, and his very soul exulted at the appearance of a Deliverer: "I was alive without the law once" is his language; "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

Fourthly, Make frequent visits to Calvary: sit beneath the wondrous cross, and behold the bleeding love of Jesus. The light of the law discovers much of the relative evil of sin, and of the fatal consequences of sinning; but in the light of the glorious Gospel, sin will appear not only hurtful, but hateful, and the heart will be filled with indignation against it. The terrors of the Lawgiver may avail to deter men from the outward practice of iniquity; but the grace and love of the Saviour, represented to the understanding and the heart, will strike at the principle and root of sin, will dissolve the heart in grief, determine and disarm the soul against it, and effectually overturn its dominion. There is a mighty

influence in the tender, the free, the self-denying, and expressive offices of a friend, in distressful circumstances, to attract and command the heart. Think, my friend, what was your deplorable situation, and mine, when Jesus appeared for our salvation: the Law was uttering its tremendous thunders against us, as children of deserved wrath, and "dead in trespasses and sins;" and "you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor;" voluntarily offering himself a sacrifice for sin, and redeeming us from the arm of the Law, by being "made a curse for us." When, then, temptation appears, and you find your heart almost ready to yield, "set the Lord before you:" think from what infinite exaltation, and blessedness, and glory he came down. Remember, it was your misery touched his heart; it was the purpose of your salvation brought him down. Survey the amazing circumstances of his bitter humiliation. Contemplate the shame, and spitting; the reed, and the scourge; the piercing thorns, and the bloody sweat; the nails, and the spear. Behold him, suffering the derision and outrage of men, the fury of the powers of darkness, and the wrath of Heaven, due to all our transgressions. Oh! look into the bitter cup, and say, was it not a cup of unmingled fury? Behold him denied the affectionate attention of friends; denied even the smiles of his heavenly Father; while for your sake "he endured the cross, despising

the shame." Was ever love so great? Can any endearments, or bonds, or motives of affection, be yet wanting? Can you refuse such a friend the throne of your heart? Can you spare his murderers, and by sin grieve his Spirit, and pierce and wilfully crucify the Son of God afresh? Come, take your standing near the cross of Jesus. When corruptions revive, and plead for indulgence; when temptations come, and by delusive arts would relax your opposition to sin; come, behold Jesus, your Saviour, in the very hands of that dreadful monster, and contemplate his agony, and his horror,—his body mangled, his soul exceeding sorrowful. Methinks, there is a voice proceeding from every bleeding wound, which cries with loud and powerful importunity, "Oh, do not spare that accursed thing, which bruised and pierced the Lord of glory! Remember your sacred engagements, the solemn seasons of your covenanting with God." "Oh, my wretched heart," (will you say), "I am ashamed and confounded in the review! How deeply did I at that time feel the importance of eternal things! How powerfully, and how sweetly was I drawn by the love and the loveliness of Jesus! Yea, he was in my esteem 'altogether lovely!' What desires I felt, what resolutions I expressed, with how prostrate a soul I engaged to be the Lord's! I called heaven and earth to witness to the sacred vow: I made a covenant with sacrifice, and imprecated the vengeance that fell on the devoted Lamb of God,

if I proved false to a covenant so solemnly sealed. Ah! where is now that impression? Where now those melting affections? Alas! my heart has turned aside, like a deceitful bow. My Lord has seen it inconsistent and estranged: he has seen the accursed thing allowed a place there. Ah! how can I bear the thought of being an apostate! How can I ever look upon the face of my injured Lord! How could I ever endure it, if with a frown he should say, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him!' Or even, if in love he should ask, 'Wilt thou also go away?' O how should I even sustain the piercing expostulation of his eye!" These expressions, my friend, were not the effect of a hasty transport of the mind. I hope, they flowed from a heart that is burdened with iniquity, and that would choose affliction rather than sin. These sentiments are serious, and deserve to be well considered; and therefore, to deepen your conviction of the evil of sin, and particularly the evil you complain of, I beg leave further to say, Charge your soul with the consideration of the injury which this evil may expose you to from Divine resentment: nothing so much prevents the acceptance of the offering we present. The smallest offering, when it is our best, and presented with clean hands, and a pure heart, finds ready acceptance; but, "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." He will not suffer a corrupt thing on his altar: he will frown away the offerer that brings strange fire there: there-

fore, "stand in awe, and sin not." Indeed, iniquity, set up in the heart of one who is a subject of renewing grace, is a sacrilegious profanation of the temple of the Lord: "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Nothing so much grieves the Holy Spirit. "The Lord our God is a jealous God:" his pure and Holy Spirit will not dwell in a heart where impure and unholy thoughts are indulged. Sin indulged there, is the abomination that maketh desolate; for if God depart, what irreparable loss is sustained, what destructive evils follow! What can supply the want of his presence? If he say, "he is joined to idols, let him alone," or "let no dew fall on him henceforth for ever," what a seat of misery does the heart of man become! What dismal darkness, coldness, barrenness, deadness, takes place there! "Yea, woe unto you when I depart from you, saith the Lord." By providential rebukes also, God is pleased often to punish secret iniquity. Many times, the griefs and troubles that a professor feels are plainly to mark with characters of Divine displeasure, "the iniquity that he knows." He who delivered the disobedient prophet unto the lion, is never at a loss for instruments whereby to reprove the sin of his people. He says, and frowns, "How shall I pardon thee for this?" He frowns perhaps on your comforts, and the

favourite gourd withers and dies. Perhaps, he divides the hearts of friends from us; suffers the enemy to have advantage against us; or gives some disease a commission to arrest us. And "when thou, Lord, with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." I may add: nothing can represent in a stronger light the malignity and hatefulness of any sin, than God's making it the punishment of other sins, even sins of the deepest dye. In this view, that word has an awful import, "For this cause God gave them up."

I am, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER L.

TO MISS B——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

My soul shall magnify the Lord with you, for the frame of mind which you have been enabled to preserve in a season of painful trial. It is, indeed, mercy for a poor sinful creature, with a sense of forgiving grace, to see the face of Infinite Majesty arrayed in smiles; to be able to get as piritual view of pains and griefs; to see the rod blossoming; and to find a store of sweetness in the carcase of the

lion. What is the glare of the most flattering prospects, when compared with the peace of God, resulting from the testimony of his Spirit with our spirit! We cannot wonder, if flesh and blood should groan complaints, amidst pains and griefs; but we should walk by faith, not by sight or sense. Faith sees the rod in a Father's hand; Faith sees and believes the love of his heart in precious promises; Faith reviews the records of surprising mercies in past experience: the troubled soul breathes, "It is well." If the means are painful, it is "if need be." The Lord doth not afflict willingly: his ways are all judgment, and his heart is love; "let him do with me as seemeth good unto him." Much is to be done, perhaps much more than I had thought of, before this polluted soul can be associated with the spirits of just men made perfect. And why should I wonder that the cutting off a right hand, or the plucking out a right eye, should occasion suffering? Let me estimate the love of God, not by the measures he adopts, but by the benefit he confers or intends. "No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous; yet afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness." God has prevented you, my friend, with the blessings of his goodness: he was found of you when you sought him not. Of his own sovereign pleasure he chose and ordained, that you should go and bring forth fruit: nay, he set you apart for himself, to shew in you the exceeding riches of his grace. Wonder not

at days and months of purification before you can be brought unto the King. Wonder not that he should allure you, and bring you into the wilderness. You might wonder, indeed, if he left you there; if he were not to speak comfortably to you there; if he were not to entertain you with meat indeed, and drink indeed; if he were not to press into your cup the clusters of Eschol, and draw aside the vail, and shew you his glory. We have no reason to expect a smooth and flowery path through the wilderness; we would not stipulate for an exemption from affliction and conflict: it is enough that he hath said, "As thy day, so thy strength shall be. My presence shall go with thee." And is not this enough to inspire courage, and help the pilgrim on his way? Far less than this carries the soldier fearless into the bloody field, and emboldens the mariner and the merchant to encounter waves and storms. Yet their hope rises no higher than a corruptible crown, perishing riches. But "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:" "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast:" it "entereth into that within the veil."—The eternal word of the eternal God! The believer gets a glimpse of the delights of Canaan, and returns fired with the prospect: filled with joy and peace in believing, he cries with holy zeal, "Let us go up and possess it, for we are able to overcome in the name of the Lord." I do not wonder that you should

long to renew your labour of love: perhaps that desire is granted before this time. However, God will fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and that will be found abundantly to exceed all that you could even ask or think. Nature is desirous of bodily ease; yet, health may not be found in the grant made to you of fatherly grace; but if the plants of Paradise, although watered by tears, appear flourishing and fruitful, and your soul prosper and be in health, you will not have cause to complain. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts: he can take care of his own cause, though he hide his most honoured instruments in the sick chamber or the grave. He can cause your dear sisters to increase, while you decrease; and because it was in your heart to serve him, in building him an house, he can put honour upon you in one way, and upon them in another way. However, it is of his own that any of us give him. It is great honour to a poor feeble worm, to be entrusted with one talent or more; and greater mercy still, to have a heart to use it: but the honour and the joy will be greatest of all, to return it with increase, and to have it received with an approving smile and most gracious testimony. Then, what songs will be heard, of rich, free, sovereign grace! what sweet congratulations between the Saviour and the dear purchase of his precious blood! With what inexpressible delight will the blessed Jesus survey those myriads of precious souls washed and sanctified, and dressed in robes of glory! How

changed the scene to his loving, suffering humanity, since darkness at his crucifixion spread its horrors over his soul! What a harvest from the corn of wheat which then fell into the ground! Let us think of Jesus, and the sharp sorrows he endured; and think less of the transient sorrows of the present life. What a mercy, to be able to gather from the secret whisper of the Holy Spirit, any sound like this; "Beloved, now are ye the sons of God!" Be it your happiness to enjoy this testimony distinct and unclouded. Let us be content, though under restraint: jubilee is advancing: the year of release is at hand.

I am, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LI.

TO MISS B——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE period of my reply has been unavoidably prolonged;—in part, by the particular attention which our late dear Mrs. L——'s state of mind required. That is now passed: the scene is changed, and the awful cloud has given place to the lustre of Divine Truth and Grace. While I greatly rejoice

over you, my friend, as by unmerited and surprising mercy brought nigh to God, and sweetly encouraged to hold fast the profession of your faith by his fatherly voice, in many an exceeding great and precious promise; still I remember, you are yet in the body, and therefore liable to very serious conflicts, and many a trying change in frames and feelings. I perceive, you are not a stranger to such vicissitudes, or to alarms occasioned by them. However, all that I might have offered with a view to establish, strengthen, and settle you, is now suppressed by that which, by the blessing of God, may more abundantly confirm your faith and enliven your joy, as it has mine: I mean, the opening of that dispensation relating to our late suffering friend. Mrs. L—, though not always equally oppressed with darkness and distress, yet never, until the near approach of death, did express any pleasant expectation. While the characters of a Divine work on her heart were to her friends satisfactorily evident, no means of comfort afforded her relief; her soul refused to be comforted, and, by a strange dexterity, extracted the very gall of bitterness from the richest cordials. Her habitual hatred of sin, and earnest desire of salvation, were manifest. Several times she repeated, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want!" while yet she concluded that her case was hopeless. Whenever an opportunity offered of aiding the spread of the Gospel, horror would seize her; because she thought, for her to pretend to assist in so great a cause, would be to act the hypocrite. The sight, or hear-

ing of a person come to the house on the grand inquiry, would throw her into an agony. "That person," she would say, "will obtain, what I have irrecoverably lost." And, what is still more affecting, under the severe pressure of affliction, accompanied with the horrors of darkness, she would sometimes be heard to mutter complaints against God, as if she were hardly dealt by, and would be almost impelled to blaspheme. On several occasions of this nature, I have been obliged to make use of strong remonstrances. I have, on such occasions, suspected the particular agency of the power of darkness, and prayer has been our only availing resource. Her reasoning would often appear, even to herself, inconsistent, and her own conclusions indefensible, yet they were not relinquished. She would be silenced, perhaps, in a degree pacified yet never to the acknowledgment of hope. For several weeks previous to dissolution, her mind discovered, generally, less agony; yet there were seasons, when horror prevailed against reason, even to stormy violence, and now and then words only served, like wind, to swell the tempest. The morning of the day preceding your dear friend's release, we were called at three o'clock, under the alarm of the cancer bleeding. This left her extremely languid and faint. Some time after, I found her in one of the afore-mentioned agonies. We prayed: we entreated the interposition of the Chief Shepherd: we conversed: we renewed the cry of distress, entreating the Lord to

rebuke the cruel adversary. Some present quietude seemed to follow. Nothing remarkable occurred until the evening of that day. Between the hours of ten and eleven, I renewed my visit, and found my friend's difficulty in speaking increased: death was advancing. "Well, my dear," I said, "I am once more come to declare to you, what a Saviour Jesus Christ is, and with what tender compassion he regards your distress." Hastily, her labouring voice interrupted me; and with a countenance expressive of inward horror, she said, "Pray, Sir, say nothing: I *know* I must perish!" I was shocked: for a moment I was silenced; and though I knew this was the utterance of a strong and impatient, though hopeless, desire of salvation, my heart trembled, lest no manifestation of the glory of God's mercy and truth should be granted before the vail of flesh should drop. However, this affecting reply threw me on my knees. We prayed: we pleaded: the Lord was pleased to fill our mouths with arguments. Mercy opened the lips of our dear friend, and her mouth shewed forth the praises of her Lord, in an earnest "Amen!" repeated three or four times. The change was manifest: in the mount it *was* seen. It was the echo of the voice of the Spirit, speaking peace. The storm was hushed: there was a great calm. The lamb was rescued from the paw of the lion, and sweetly laid in the Shepherd's bosom. I said, "Now, is not the Lord Jesus gracious?" "Yes, indeed," she replied, "he is." "Now, cannot

you commit your soul to him, and fear no evil?" "Yes, I can!" "Now, you long to be in heaven, to praise him better than you now are able?" "Yes, I do! I do!" she exclaimed; adding, with great energy, "Oh, I could do any thing, or bear any thing; I could still bear my affliction in life, or suffer any thing in death, if I might in any way bring glory to God!" I repeated that Scripture, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit, &c." She replied, "I can truly say that." "Well," said I, "you have had a long and distressful night: now the day is come, would you not wish me to tell your friends what God has done for you?" "Oh yes: pray do!" "Well, we shall soon meet, and review God's dealings with you in this conflict and deliverance." She replied, "Happy, happy meeting!"—It was one o'clock, Lord's-day morning, when I retired to rest; but a transition so quick and delightful, the immediate return of prayer, elevated and transported my mind, while my eyes were kept waking. The glory of mercy and truth seemed to shine around my head. My soul rejoiced that I had ever known this vessel of mercy: the part I had borne in her distressful conflict was amply recompensed. Yet on my return, I found reason to regret that I had left her: her mind was again clouded, but the word of God and prayer again prevailed. When speech failed, her countenance brightened; and soon after ten o'clock, Lord's-day morning, she ceased to breathe, and went to Jesus without a sigh. "Precious, in the sight of the Lord,

is the death of his saints!" Now, my friend, is there not a God in Israel, and is he not faithful? Yes! and who shall separate us from his love? Verily, he is a God that hideth himself: but blessed are all they that wait for him.

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LII.

TO MISS B——.

I GRIEVE, my dear friend, to think how long your last kind and welcome letter has remained unanswered. It is not to be ascribed to want of affection. I love to think and speak of you, and of what the grace of God has wrought in you and by you; and were you with me, your observation would furnish sufficient apology for my seeming delay. I spent a few hours last week with ——, and since that, have called on your dear mother and sister, at ——. There I wanted opportunity for the kind of conversation I wished. Blessed society, where all are "one heart and one soul," and all have received the "unction of the Holy One." Yet, how thankful ought we to be for the discrimination of the grace of God in the present life! What a lot is theirs, whom God hath set apart for himself! He

finds them subjects of sin and misery, and appoints them to "the inheritance of the saints in light," and then undertakes to make them meet for that glorious state.

I hear with much concern, that you, my dear friend, are under an afflictive visitation. It will be a transient visit, I trust, and not distressful; a passing cloud, that will distil in dews of heavenly blessing; the visit of a Physician, whose medicines may be bitter, but whose skill cannot be doubted. He may put you to pain; but his design is gracious, and his heart is tenderness and love. It is one thing to be in the hand of the Lord, as a righteous and wrathful Judge; and another, to be in his hand as the God of grace, working salvation within us, and drawing the characters of his own name on the soul. Truly, it is our wisdom to yield ourselves to him, and to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, while he sits as a Refiner, purging away the dross, and taking away the tin. What a purifying and endearing representation is that, "By *his* stripes ye are healed!" Our souls derive life eternal, from his wounds and death. What did he suffer, that we might be delivered from raging disease and death! And to what painful measures should not we be willing to submit, if thereby we may be brought to experience the healing virtue of his precious blood? Sin has opened many an avenue, by which affliction and trouble may assail us in this life; but "Christ in you" is a blessed antidote to over-

whelming trouble. Christ, and a sweet sense of forgiveness through his dying love; Christ, and the firm hope of being like him, and of being with him; how much is contained in this, to relieve the bitterness of the bitterest cup, and silence every complaining thought! Luther said well, "Lord, pardon my sin, and strike me where thou wilt;" willing to receive the blow in his person, his estate, his relations,—any where, so that sin were pardoned, and love directed the hand that wounded him. And again, "Lord, strike; strike me any where, so sin may feel it." Let me have losses, crosses, sickness, poverty, any thing that thy fatherly wisdom and love shall appoint; so that my sins be subdued, and my precious soul prosper, and be in health. Oh the excellency, the suitableness, the fulness, that is in Christ Jesus! How often the heart of a poor man has revived at the sight of a kind benefactor; the heart of a sick man, at the approach of a physician; the heart of a captive, at the sound of his redeemer's footsteps! But "Christ is all, and in all." Satan, as far as permitted, will be taking us from one mountain of vanity to another, that he might entangle our minds with creature-love; but where is the mountain from whence the spiritual sense will not determine, that the world, in its fairest appearance, possesses no glory in comparison of the glory that excelleth? The Lord Jesus too, blessed be his name, leads us about, that he may instruct us; leads us through vales of sorrow, and

over mountains of difficulty, and sometimes down into the depths of trouble: but sometimes, he reveals his arm, he sheds the beams of his glory around us. The further we go with him, the more we see of him, and the more we know him, the more we shall love him. Love is the centurion in our soul: it has a commanding power: it issues its orders to every power and faculty, and says to one, "Go," and he goeth; and to another, "Come," and he cometh. Blessed principle! It is pleasant to obey when love to Christ commands; and Christ cannot be known, where he is not beloved. What a privilege, then, to possess any thing of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord! This is eternal life. Well did one say, "I delight most in that sermon which discovereth most of sin in me, and most of Christ Jesus unto me." And have we not sometimes found reason to review with heart-felt gratitude one affliction and another, on the account of the advantage we thereby gained, in respect of our knowledge of Christ and fellowship with him. Then, when future trials come, clouds are passing over us, and storms seem to be rising, rather than yield to unbelieving fears, and the mutterings of flesh and blood, let us prepare to meet our Lord, and to hail the manifestations of his glory and his love in that stormy trial. How delighted will our souls be, when every vail shall be removed, and the God of salvation shall be seen, and his

works and ways shall be contemplated in the light of glory! Then nothing shall be heard but "Hallelujah! He hath done all things well!"

Truly, the present are times of great distress to many, and of great anxiety to all who have the interest of our country, and of Zion at heart. A heavy cloud hangs over our manufactories and commerce. It occasions alarm in several respects: many fear, lest the measure of national sin should be shortly filled up by decrees oppressive to many of the people of God. However, though God may pursue sin with indignation and wrath, he will not fail to provide a hiding place for those who love him. Oh, to stand in the cleft of the rock, and only hear the thundering sound of his chariot, and see his flaming arrows as he passes in awful judgments by! The cup has gone round, and is not yet at rest. But there is a gracious call; "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers," &c.

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LIII.

TO MISS B———.

MANY times have I purposed, since your affecting loss, to tell you how much I participate in your sorrows, and how much mercy, I think, is mingled in this bitter cup. Yes, we have to sing of mercy and of judgment; and mercy claims the first note, and deserves a very high strain of thanksgiving. Indeed, the loss is severe; the sufferings of grief cannot be, nor ought they to be, restrained. Jesus himself wept over the grave of Lazarus; yet it is the hand of Jesus that has struck this comfort dead. The breath of your gracious Lord has blasted that which, perhaps, you would call the fairest gourd in your earthly paradise; that from which you expected refreshment for many years to come. But has he done this for his own pleasure? What! to satiate himself with the griefs, and tears, and agonies of a widowed partner, of motherless children, and bereaved relations and friends? Oh, no: this is not after the manner of Him who came from his throne of glory, and paid our ransom with his own most precious blood. We know enough of his character, and of his heart, to assure us that he has some great, some most gracious design to answer. Who can tell but he means to effect an entrance as rightful Lord and

Saviour into some heart, and by this wound to open the way. Then you may hereafter hear such a confession as this: "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me." I lost a beloved earthly friend, or I had not found, nor sought, "the Chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely."

Is it not delightful to think of the *end* to which all his measures relating to his people are directed? "to the praise of the glory of his grace!" And is it hard to believe that measures, directed by Infinite Wisdom and Love, are well chosen? Let us be content at present, though the Ministers of Providence work with their hands "under their wings," and though their operations are wrapped up in cloud and mystery. Soon the whole work will be completed; the light of celestial glory will shine upon it: Jesus the Lamb in the midst of the throne will entertain us with a bright vision of it, will submit the whole to our inspection, and make his appeal to our reason and our sense. Then how shall we reflect on our complaints!

His own soft hand shall wipe the tears
From ev'ry weeping eye;
And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,
And death itself shall die.

And is there not sometimes found a great deal of sweet peace and rich contentment in a time of afflic-

tion, when our minds can feel a ground on which to rest in the eternal word of the "Lord God of Truth," and we can with patient submission bow to his will? Is there a better evidence of adoption? "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." It is the worthless brier that is neglected and left uncut: the vine is valued, and therefore pruned. The Saints have in all ages gone to their blessed home through much tribulation; and those of them who were most precious in the sight of the Lord have had the largest share.

It seems as if patient submission to the will of God, in affliction, were the brightest ornament and the highest perfection of our nature. Our Great High Priest was "made perfect by suffering;" and his Spirit admonishes us, "Let Patience have her perfect work," (as if it belonged to her to put the finishing hand, the last touch, in forming Christ in the soul); "that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing:" and tribulation worketh patience, and brings us to bear, with humble resignation, the will of God in severe afflictions. And what shall we say of this duty under the afflicting circumstances of the present dispensation? Is our God a hard Master? Can we take a survey, and not confess that submission is a reasonable service? Surviving friends, for a season, have lost a much-endeared earthly comfort; but God, the All-sufficient, well knows how to heal the breach, and cause that loss to be their great gain. But let Faith, instead of Sense,

judge and determine of this measure of Providence. It will open Heaven, and all its joys and glories, to our view. It will represent the flight of the ransomed and heaven-born spirit to her proper home, and her reception, entertainment, and exaltation there, till, in the delightful vision, our griefs are lost in congratulation and praise. Often I think how wonderfully the grace of God prevented and blessed you. This is great, very great mercy: but it seems as if this were not all. Grace had a further respect. "I will bless thee," the God of Grace seems to have said, "and thou shalt be a blessing!" May the word of God, and the Spirit of God, still go forth by your conversation, and may others glorify God in you and for you!

Your's, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LIV.

TO MISS B——.

Now I begin to hope I may one day meet in the body my much-endeared correspondent, with the rest of her highly-favoured family. Blessed be God, who has done so much for you, and with the same oil of his precious grace has proceeded to fill other vessels of your household! Glorious privilege! My

dear friend, how much have you to say of the grace of God! When the fountain of everlasting love has found a passage into the hearts of the children of men, what limits can be set to expectation? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The vessel will no doubt expand as it is supplied. The source of supply is unmeasurable; the vessel, therefore, will for ever be receiving, for ever enlarging, and suffer no diminution by all its offerings of joy and praise at the foot of the throne. Here I am struck with the recollection of a saying of a celebrated minister, Mr. D. Burgess:—"Did any sinful man, when converted to God, fully know the extent of privilege to which he stands intitled, he must at once either live by miracle, or die for joy." Then there is nothing unreasonable in the exhortation of our great Master, to "rejoice evermore." "In every thing give thanks." Afflictions in one respect or other we all have, we must have. Our present state bespeaks them. It is a warfare; it is a pilgrimage: it is not our rest. We will count, then, upon losses and disappointments in the creature; and though we may be pierced by troubles when they come, and flesh and blood complain, yet, in the strength of our great Captain, we will take the shield of faith; they shall not lay hold of our heart to depress and sink it; they shall not provoke us to conclude ungratefully; that we are not beloved because afflicted. We will not be offended at Christ, or at his ways, because of them. We will take up our cross, and bear our

griefs humbly, submissively, cheerfully. We will endeavour to get above them, and live above them, above the discouraging thoughts they are so apt to awaken. We will forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those things which are before, and, among them, to the precious fruits of sanctified afflictions.

My dear friend, I cannot tell you that you will never have another cross so heavy; but I can tell you, that a sight of Christ crucified will make the heaviest burden light: and what, indeed, will not love to Christ enable a saved sinner to do and to bear? How would it constrain him to think well of all that his Lord does! How often, even in this world, the clearing up of dark and distressful dispensations presents surprising discoveries of tender love, and serves, like fuel fresh applied to the spark of Divine love in the heart, to raise it to a flame! Then, what will our experience be amidst the opening visions of Heaven? Oh! let us look forward beyond the Cross to the Crown; beyond the discipline of our Father's family on earth, to their state of perfection and glory, when he shall have fulfilled in them "all the good pleasure of his goodness! then, griefs and fears, and hard thoughts of God, and mutterings of complaint, will be for ever lost in ecstacies of wonder and joy. Let us bless God, then, for a good hope through grace. It is worth all the bliss that creature-streams can afford, a thousand times told. Let us be thankful for a firm ground

of hope, and that sometimes we can feel the stability of that ground, and find rest, even rest in trouble, thereon. Yet we would not be high minded, but fear, and exercise a godly jealousy over ourselves. We would not presume on our own strength, but lean on the arm of Him who is "the Alpha and Omega" in the great work of salvation. Oh! what should be the affection, the holy conversation, of a redeemed sinner! What love, what praise, what service, may be expected from her! And what is all she can do, compared with the immense obligations she is under? I rejoice, my dear friend, in what the grace of God has enabled you to do, and blessed you in doing. I regard with delight your prayers, and tears, and endeavours, for the salvation of those you love, and "glorify God in you."

I contemplate your exertions, with those of your sisters, in the Sunday School, and admire the grace that has given you the opportunity, and prepared your heart, to serve a Master so great and so good. But if we could serve God on earth as he is served in heaven; if we had the strength of angels and glorified saints, to do his will, we should fall infinitely short of his great love in choosing us, and calling us with an holy calling. What returns can be made for converting grace so sovereignly conferred? And how should we admire the exceeding greatness of that power which wrought effectually to change a mind that was bent on departing from the living God;

that was blindly pursuing vanity, and madly rushing into misery, shame, and death? Oh, what could creature-friendship, and all created power, have done! Had all the angels in heaven received it in charge to stand in the way of one poor sinner, running, with all his might, to destruction, and drive him back, without the concurrence of the Almighty Power and Spirit of God, those heavenly hosts would have been too feeble and too few to have blocked up all the passages between sin and hell, and turn him into the way of peace. It is the arm of the Lord that has done it; in amazing grace and condescension and sovereignty, done it. Then how should my feeble lips labour to speak his praise, and all that is within me attempt to serve him!

Let us not think it strange to be reminded, and sometimes to be made very painfully to feel, that we are in the wilderness; but let us admire the mercy that has encompassed our path with so many refreshing springs, that sheds so blessed an influence upon us, and entertains us with the prospects and songs of Sion in this strange land. For my own part, I have been (in respect of personal, and especially of relative mercies) satiated, and sometimes almost overwhelmed, with the Lord's great and various goodness: and I have superadded pleasure in congratulating you on the aboundings of the mercy of God unto you and yours. The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards an-

other, and towards all men, even as we do towards you! The Lord be with you, my dear friend, and bless you, and perform all things for you, and then nothing but good will happen to you!

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LV.

TO MISS B——.

I THANK you, my dear young friend, for your free and affectionate address. You could not have furnished occasion of higher gratification to me, than when you thus state,—"I do not find that pleasure or profit I could wish in reading the Bible, or in the duty of private prayer; which is a great grief to me, and at times depresses my spirits exceedingly. Yet, if I know my own heart, there is not any thing on earth but what I would cheerfully resign, to possess an interest in Christ and his salvation. I impute my present feelings to the hardness and unbelief of my own sinful heart, though it is my constant prayer to be cleansed from all secret faults. Those seasons, when I can feel and acknowledge my own weakness and insufficiency, and rely only on my blessed Saviour, are very delightful." But you are discouraged, because you never experience any joys and raptures as many do; because your

heart appears cold in closet duties, and very unwilling to pay attention to any thing which is serious; because you feel no evidence in yourself of a saving change; therefore, sometimes, you even fear that you never shall be called by grace. Now, my friend, I will tell you what appears to me to be the mind of the Spirit of God in the Word, respecting your case thus stated. There is a change that passes on the saved sinner, and it is great and indispensable: it is a passing from death to life, from darkness to light, from a state of condemnation and wrath into a state of acceptance and covenant-friendship with God; from a state of servile subjection to sin and satan, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Of this distinguished happy family of new-created heaven-born minds, Christ is the head. It is in virtue of their being brought into the fellowship of Christ, and being by faith and love united to him, that they are made to partake of spiritual life, and begin to taste and savour the good word of God, to be sensible of pleasures and pains, and to express desires and antipathies, to which they had been strangers. The Second Adam has been to them a quickening Spirit; their new and spiritual life is manifested; and all the sufficiency of that life is in Christ, and to be received out of his fulness; so that the life and strength, and growth and comfort, of a soul born from above, will be according as his believing regards are to the Lord Jesus Christ. His dependance on Christ is absolute, far more so than that of the sucking

child on its mother; for if, in this case, the natural provision fail, other supplies may be substituted; in the other, it is impossible. Indeed, the natural outgoing of the renewed soul is towards Christ; for God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into his heart, and his griefs and fears, and wants, and joys, constrain the pathetic cry, "Abba, Father!" I know, my friend, you want to be satisfied of the reality of this great and blessed change, the existence of this life of God in your soul; but what is the proof, the evidence, we are to look for? You have no reason to be discouraged, though you cannot refer precisely to the time when you were delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. Were I to ask you how old you are, I believe you could answer me only as your ears have heard, and others have told you: nor ought you to question the reality of your spiritual life, because the change was not introduced or attended with those convictions and terrors, with which the rocky hearts of many have been rent. The Spirit of God is sovereign in his operations, and effects the same change, accomplishes the same design, in very different ways. Though he has not been pleased to call for the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the storm, to prepare his way to your heart; yet, if he has prevented you with the blessing of his goodness, and, before you called, has answered you; if he has instructed you with his eye, and by a look which penetrated your soul, has sent you to your closet trem-

bling and weeping over your sins and your heart of sin; if, with a still small voice, he has spoken in some precious word to your soul, and sweetly drawn and made you willing, in the day of his power, to accept of Christ as he is offered in the Gospel; if he has poured upon you the Spirit of grace and supplication, and has caused you to look on HIM whom you "have pierced, and mourn," and, in the contemplation of the cross and sufferings of Christ, has discovered to you the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and taught you to regard it with hatred and revenge, as your worst enemy; if he has shed abroad the love of God in your heart, and made it a new, and powerful, and delightful principle of obedience; if the hand of the Lord has been upon you, and wrought in your soul such tempers as these, then has he herein spoken good concerning you, and peace unto you: nor should you suffer any reasonings of an unbelieving or desponding mind to take that peace from you. It is pleasant, and greatly to be desired, to live beneath unclouded heavens, and in the exercise of fervent love to Christ; yet our heavenly Father, in his infinite wisdom and grace, chooses a very different path for many of his dear children. He leads them amidst clouds and darkness, with many sighs, and griefs, and tears; yet, HIS way is always found to be the right way. In this respect, the experience of our late friend, Mrs. L—, is particularly remarkable, of which you have heard, and perhaps, ere long, you may read. I

wish, therefore, that you would set the Lord before you,—the Lord Jesus, the Friend and Saviour of perishing sinners,—in all the wonders of his love, the grace he so freely tenders, and the service he requires. Then ask, "Is my heart with him? Do I hunger and thirst for his salvation? Am I willing that he should save me from my sins, from all of them, and by whatever means he shall choose? Could I find delight in his ways, in his word, in the company of his people? Could I hold fast the profession of my faith amidst painful trials, and even persecution, for his dear name's sake, and find my all in Christ, though called to suffer the loss of all things for him. If you find such a heart in you, you have evidence more substantial than that which arises from joys and raptures. The Spirit himself beareth witness with your spirit. These are the impressions of his own seal; these are the effects of the great change which you are solicitous to have evidence of; the strong and restless desire of the sincere milk of the word; godly sorrow for sin; fleeing for refuge to Christ; cleaving to him by faith and love; devotedness and submission of the soul to him. These are the characters and actings of the children of God: they demonstrate spiritual life as truly as breathing, and crying, and feeding evidence natural life. Then, let not your heart be troubled: regard with thankfulness what God has done; and still wait upon him, and pour out your soul before him: he will not shut out your prayer.

He may withhold sensible comforts to make you more importunate; but "then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord."

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LVI.

TO MISS B——.

TRULY, there is no friend like the blessed Lord Jesus. Though it is comparatively very little that I know of him, yet, from what I have seen and known, I have reason to speak of his grace with eternal admiration. He drew me with the cords of his love; and, I trust, effectually bound my heart to him at a very early period; and the experience of revolving years, in a long succession, has contributed very greatly to endear his beloved name, to increase confidence in him, and to render his service more sweet; nor is there any thing within my power that I would not do to aid a humble inquirer, whose heart is prepared to leave all to follow him. I have, and I hope *you* have, a persuasion, that you truly, and from your very heart, desire to be his; but whether he will receive you, is a question you have often regarded with trembling and

anxiety. These suspicions are the result of mistaken or clouded apprehensions. Did unbelief interpose no veil between your mind and the representation which is given of him in his own most precious promises, and the wonderful rewards of his love, you would not suspect the sincerity of your own heart; you could not hesitate a moment in respect to the willingness of the Saviour, or his ability. To be the Saviour of lost sinners is the commission he has received from his Father: it is his office, and for this he is *anointed*;—it is the commission he has *accepted*;—it is the business in which his soul is engaged. What heart-felt joy, even in a dark night, has a poor sinner sometimes found in those words: "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God!" What has he done, what has he suffered, to secure this most gracious purpose! What a ransom has he paid! What enemies has he vanquished! What mountains have been made low; what valleys have been exalted; what obstacles, that must for ever have been insuperable to every arm but his, have yielded to his determination to open to helpless, wretched outcasts, a way of return to God, though at the expense of the last drop of his blood! Wonderful determination of the Lord of glory, in regard of his own creatures in the vilest rebellion! Precious blood! in the view of a humble broken-hearted sinner seeking salvation. What a meeting will there be of the Saviour and his ransomed tribes, when the import of those words from his eternal Father shall be fully known, "By the blood

of thy covenant have I sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water!" Then with what transport will Jesus see his seed, while with infinite satisfaction he remembers Calvary! He will rest in his love; he will rejoice over you with singing. And must it not be to him, even now, an occasion of joy, when, by effectual calling, he hath found the sheep he had lost? I mention these things, my dear young friend, to shew how unreasonable it is to doubt whether the Lord Jesus will receive a sinner who comes to him. Now can you desire a better warrant than his own gracious, importunate, repeated call, accompanied with the sweet assurance, "Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out;" a call enforced by the drawing of his Spirit? Tell me, are you not willing to receive him, to rest all your hope upon him, to possess your all for time and for eternity in him? But this is not the case with all that are invited. Alas! many hold fast iniquity, many cleave to the world, while they trust in themselves that they are righteous. They are already engaged in a covenant, and will not break it, with hell and with death. But your heart is with Christ, and you account all things but loss that you may win Christ. You are crying, "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest," in that blessed hiding place! Well, God has provided strong consolation for all who flee for refuge to lay hold on the blessed hope! And whence is your willingness to receive Christ? It is because Christ is willing to bestow himself and all his treasures on you: it is be-

cause he has begun to overturn the throne of Satan in your will. He has been gathering you with his arms that he may lay you in his bosom; and cause you to inherit substance, and fill your treasures. Then come, come to Jesus: it is not contrition or deep humiliation alone, that renders you acceptable to Christ; but it is your coming to him, your leaving all to follow him, and your making him your all. This does him honour; and then is your sense of sin sufficient, when it produces this effect. I hope, my dear friend, you *are* come; that the great transaction has passed in retirement; and that you are daily coming, weary and heavy laden, to his open arms. The Lord bless you, and make you a blessing!

I am, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LVII.

TO MISS M——— B———.

Now, my dear friend, I am come to tell you how greatly I rejoice with you, and rejoice over you in the Lord; how tenderly I love you, because the Lord loveth you, and hath done great things for you, and because you desire to love him as your "all in all;"—for truly the Lord Jesus is nothing at all to those to whom he is not "all in all." Mercy,

sovereign mercy, how wonderful its grants and its operations! How endearing, encouraging, animating its promises and prospects! The debt of love how vast! How little at best can a saved sinner render the Lord for the mercy that has pardoned his sins, and placed him in his own beloved and honoured family! What a mercy to be, though but a babe, in that family! The Father of all has appointed that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak: nay, and he himself compassionates and sustains them, and suffers them to lean, with all their infirmities, and wants, and cares, upon him. Must I congratulate my dear young friend as a child in this distinguished happy family? Yes, I trust, by the all-creating power of the Lord Jesus, you are formed anew. A new life has been breathed into your soul: you begin to live the life of faith, the life of God; the life that has grace for its spring, the word for its rule, Christ for its food, and heaven and God and glory for its end. Your eyes have been newly opened: you have light, newness of light, not natural only, but spiritual light. You are ashamed, and even grieved, when you look at and into yourself. You see that transcendent loveliness in the Lord Jesus which natural light never discovered. Strength you have, though but a little strength. Strength, not to bear the will of your Father, as his older children can, and as you hope to do, but strength to sigh over the sense of your weakness, to lisp out, "Abba, Father!" to receive the sincere

milk of the word, and to go while a Father's grace sustains you. You have, I trust, the affection also of a child: you can *love* much, though you cannot *do* much. The voice of Christ, in his word, is music in your ears. It is the voice of your beloved. Associated with affection, you have the natural antipathy of a child to that which his Father hateth. You have a deep-rooted, irreconcileable hatred of sin. The spirit in you warreth against the flesh. Grace is weak: you cannot prevail so far as to extirpate and destroy sin: yet it is your grief; and you resist, and strive against it, and cry for help against it. Nay, and you tremble at the word of God; yet this fear ariseth from love in the renewed soul, who is born of God: it is his food, his joy, his life. Seasons of distressful doubt and darkness may come, when these remarks may have their use. You know your spiritual birth is recent. Your corruptions and unbelieving fears will not suffer you to forget that you are a little child. The burden of affliction and of duty will convince you that your strength is small. But it is great mercy to have grace in the principle of it, however feeble; to be a child in God's family, though a new-born infant. Our God despiseth not the day of small things. He loves, tenderly loves, his child, though a babe; graciously listens to his voice, though feeble; and is touched with a feeling of his infirmities. A feeble believer has as secure an interest in Christ, as one that is strong: he is as truly redeemed from the curse of the law, he has as full a pardon,

he is as fully justified by the righteousness of Christ; his name is as truly written in heaven; and he has as really, if not as clearly, a title to the inheritance of the saints in light. Union with Christ, and the fulness of the Spirit of Life in him, is a privilege which belongs to the weak as well as to the strong. The feeble Lamb is led and guarded: he lives and feeds upon Christ as truly as others; and if, in following Christ, he cannot keep pace with the flock, the gracious Shepherd will take him in his arms. He will lay no more upon him than he is able to bear. Then, my dear, be thankful for grace in the bud, for a little strength, for the least mite of heavenly treasure. It is an earnest of more. Emulate the strong, but do not envy them. In the last day, multitudes will be found among professors to have no grace, and little grace will become glory. A little grace is more precious than rubies; for you have with it the precious blood of Christ, precious promises, and precious faith. You will, however, suffer affectionate counsel to accompany these words of consolation: Who does not find reason to suspect himself? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Often and carefully, then, examine yourself: see that the change that has passed upon you be an universal, as well as a real change of heart; that you hate sin *as* sin, and that you hate all sin; that Christ is truly your hope, that the desire of your soul is towards him. Then pray with the Disciples, "Lord, increase my faith." Cultivate warm affec-

tions towards your beloved Saviour, and all who love him. Be thankful for the manifestation of your Saviour's presence and love, whenever he shall be pleased to vouchsafe it, in a promise or in an ordinance: but rest upon his word when he is pleased to hide himself. "Blessed is he who hath not seen, yet hath believed." If you have not the sensible smiles of your Lord, yet let his word dwell in you richly. Ponder his word in your heart. Thus you will be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and others will glorify Christ in you. May the Divine blessing rest upon you, and every branch of your family, even until every sheaf bow to Jesus!

I am, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LVIII.

TO MR. ——,

ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THOUGH I had much reason to fear, from your former letter, that your dearest creature-delight would speedily be separated from you, yet I could not but be much affected with the melancholy information your last brought me. How uncertain, and often

how transient, are our creature-enjoyments! How quickly the fairest prospects of earthly felicity are absorbed by clouds of darkness! I do not want a heart to sympathize with my friend, when his refreshing gourd is fallen, from which he had promised himself many succeeding years of pleasurable rest. But why am *I* dealt with by the glorious Disposer of all events with such peculiar tenderness? Fifteen months nearly close the scene of my dear friend's conjugal felicity, yet for more than twenty years an impassable hedge has been set around me, and around all that I have, nor has the great destroyer been once suffered to enter. I hope I would rejoice with trembling; I hope I do not want a heart to praise the great Source and Guardian of my many comforts. I hope, when times of suffering shall come, that suffering grace will be given, and then I shall say, with my mourning friend, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." I am thankful for you, my dear Sir, that you see the stroke directed by a Father's hand. I rejoice with you in the satisfying reason you have to conclude that the friend you love is not vanquished by the King of Terrors; but, as to her *mortal part*, fallen asleep in Jesus, and, as to her *immortal part*, entered into the *joy of her Lord*. Oh, delightful thought! I cannot help thinking, that, great as your affection is, you will sometimes contemplate your partner's gain, till you have almost forgotten your pain, and feel reconciled to your loss. You will behold her, not encompassed with infirmity,

oppressed with bodily weakness, disease, and pain: not disquieted with doubts and fears, temptations, and sins: not complaining of a divided heart, of languid graces, and heartless services, and Divine withdrawments: but you will behold her for ever free from sin and sorrow, arrayed in robes made white in the blood of the Lamb; every lovely temper, every power of her soul, delightfully improved; surrounded with objects, and engaged in employments, calculated to raise in her breast a perpetual ecstacy of joy: you will behold her welcomed and embraced by the saints above, and filled with their company; you will behold her, where every Christian pilgrim would rejoice to be, at the feet of Jesus, "present with the Lord," in the full vision of his glory, in the full beamings of his love.

> That blissful interview how sweet!
> To fall transported at his feet!
> Rais'd in his arms, to view his face
> In the full beamings of his grace!

You cannot, my dear friend, soon lose the memory of your endeared companion. I would not wish it. You cannot think too much of her, if you contemplate her in a proper light. Then reflection will not aggravate your sorrows, but will constrain you to rejoice in her blessedness, and you will devoutly listen to the voice of inviting affection, which whispers from above, "Come up hither." By no means let our converse with our

dear departed friends cease, though the veil of flesh be dropt. By contemplation our souls can find delight in their joys; and perhaps their access to us is much more near than we are generally aware. Indeed, my highest entertainment is often found in converse with the dead. The most pleasant moments of my last journey were spent over the grave of those who were once, and are still, very dear to me. Oh! what a blessing is the Gospel! What a sweet relief does religion, genuine religion, afford in a time of suffering! What a mercy to have our hearts directed into the love of God, and to have free access to a God of consolation! When the streams of creature-felicity fail us, what a mercy to have our real interests secured by a covenant ordered in all things and sure, and to be satisfied that the love of God is ever the same; that this glorious Sun still shines as full and as bright as ever, though clouds and darkness in the atmosphere below may for a season hide him from our sight.

I trust you will soon be able to trace the love of God in this mournful dispensation of his Providence, and sing of judgment, and sing of mercy. You have one tie less to this world, and one attraction more to a better world. You will be able, I trust, to direct your thoughts and your heart with greater liberty towards heaven, and to seek, with glowing ardour, that better country. Then the loss of this dear object of your affection will be repaired by

the sweeter expressions of that love, which fills the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I am, Sir, &c. &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LIX.

TO MR. S———.

I THANK you for yours of the 13th. To hear of your success heightens my pleasure; yet I have seen so many instances, among the people of God, of the injurious influence of worldly prosperity, that I rejoice with a degree of trembling; and as I stand on the ground of a long-established friendship, I think I cannot help pointing my friend to the shield, when I apprehend danger to be near. My imagination has for some time past presented him to my view as exposed to temptations, by which many have been wounded, and to which he is in a great measure a stranger: like a tree in full bloom, assaulted by a bleak eastern wind, or a ship launching forth into the perilous sea. Will you forgive me, if I say I am afraid of you, lest you should not stand the blast, or ride the storm—perhaps I might rather have said, endure the calm without injury. Alas! what feeble, irresolute, creatures we are! After having so often confessed ourselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and that seriously and sincerely too, how quickly, how

easily, are we captivated by the glory of the world! How soon do we lose the impression of a Saviour's dying love! How insensibly do we lose the ardour of our affection, even to him whom our hearts have often adored as altogether lovely; and yet, like the mighty Sampson in his inglorious fall, we are sometimes insensible of our loss, until wounds and bruises teach us that the Lord is departed. It is not without reason that that solemn warning is left upon record, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." What! (you are ready to say) does my friend think that I would depart from the living God, whose name I have so long professed, and whose favour I prefer to a thousand worlds? No, my dear Sir, I know enough of you, and of that grace wherein you stand, to satisfy me in that respect. I only fear that worldly enticements may prevail to shake your stedfastness in your Christian walk, to chill the heavenly ardour of your spirits and injure you in your sweetest enjoyments. But you say again, What can be the ground of these fears? What has my friend heard? Most heartily shall I rejoice, my dear Sir, in being satisfied from you that my fears have no sufficient ground. However, I must refer you to your own letter, as that which has given me the alarm. Your letters have always pleased and often refreshed and animated me; and I am well pleased with your remarks on the 23d Psalm, in your last letter. They are just and good. I do not, however, think you are quite

so happy in the gloss you put on the passages which refer to Joshua and David, and the application you make of them. They are introduced, I perceive, by way of apology for your own conduct. As to public ordinances, you say, I and my dear M—— are frequently obliged to put up with the loss of them in the winter season. What! thought I, thunder-struck (as we say) by this expression, put up with the loss of public ordinances, and that frequently! Surely my friend did not so formerly, when he had the same difficulties to encounter. Those difficulties did not *then* daunt him; but now he dreams of a lion in the way, and flatters himself, that as "he cannot go to the house of God, the God of the house will come to him." My good friend, this sentiment of Mr. Henry is very just and excellent, full of comfort to the real prisoners of Providence; but let us not apply it to such difficulties as a little self-denial and resolution would surmount. I admire another saying, which the same good man records, of a devout Jewish Rabbin, who, being strongly recommended to a place where many advantages would be united on his settlement, on hearing that there was no synagogue there, resolutely refused, devoutly replying, to every remonstrance, "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver." But what, my good friend! must the flagrant hypocrisy of Jehu, or the irregular zeal of many professors in the present day, suppress the fervour of our zeal for public ordinances, and still the panting

of the hunted hart for the water brooks? Or will David's temper and conduct, and especially his zeal for the house of God, which almost swallowed up his desire, his care, his thought, afford the shadow of a plea for the frequent omission of public ordinances? It is true, personal and family religion are of very high importance; and I believe it is equally true, that the more the genuine principle of godliness prevails within us, the more earnestly our souls will long to appear before God in Zion, where he especially loves to dwell, and where he eminently commands the blessing. Thus, my friend, I have stated my fears with a freedom which nothing but the truest friendship could have reconciled me to using. I need not multiply arguments in favour of a close walk with God: you have learned them from the Scripture; you have long felt their power and sweetness; and still, I trust, you will.

I am, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

LETTER LX.

TO A FRIEND,

ON THE DEATH OF A DAUGHTER.

MY DEAR SIR,

CONDOLENCE and congratulation must be united in my reply to your letter of affecting infor-

mation received on Monday last. Nature and sense seem to demand a tribute of grief and of tears on such an occasion as this: they would fix the weeping eye and the bleeding heart on the withered gourd, the lovely form dissolved and lost in death, and, insatiable as the grave, still cry, Give, give! But in the vision which faith opens to our view, the horror of these scenes is greatly relieved by the glory of objects transcendently delightful and eternal. We realise the joy of heaven, and can scarcely regret the falling of the seed into the earth. We behold the friends we love in the fulness of heaven's delights: in the palace,—in the very arms of the Infinite Jehovah; and we almost forget our loss in the joy of their salvation. Happy should we be if we could more intently and habitually "look at those things which are not seen," for they "are eternal."

A lovely young lady, once my intimate friend, in her near approach to dissolution, observing her father overcome with grief, thus pertinently remonstrated: "Why, Sir, so much grief? Had an offer of marriage been made by one who in himself was all you could wish, and whose situation in life was far superior to mine, but whose residence must be in a remote part of the kingdom, perhaps the consideration of advantage and promotion to me would have reconciled you to my removal, though it would have been little other than a separation for life. But I am now about to be promoted incomparably

beyond any thing that could have occurred in this world. Then why this reluctance? Our next meeting will be in circumstances of high improvement, joyful and perpetual."

You, my dear Sir, will discern a great deal in this affecting visitation, that calls for resignation and even complacency in the will of Heaven; nay, and gratitude and holy admiration. God put great honour on Jesse's family, in the designation and holy anointing by the hand of Samuel, of one of his sons for the throne of Israel; but He has put an higher honour upon your family. He has graciously visited your house; marked with peculiar affection that lovely branch which stood most exposed to the blast of temptation, gathered her under His shadow, put His Spirit upon her, beautified her with His salvation, and then, pointing to his palace in glory, said, "Follow me!" She was charmed into obedience. His grace, his love, his glory constrained her. She went exulting; and well she might. But when she had shaken off the burden of flesh and every oppressive infirmity, and had entered through the gate into the city, she exulted with a warmer heart and a louder voice. Then, what reverence, what wonder and surprise mingled with her joy, while kindred spirits, in language of high congratulation, directing her transported eye to Him who sitteth on the throne, said, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him!" O, my dear Sir! it is a heaven worth dying for, to see our smiling God.

And for what purpose is life desirable, but for the improvement of the advantages given us in seeking and serving the Lord? May you and I find a quickening power attend these solemn events. Alas! how slothful our spirits! How earthly and sensual are they! How seldom do we rise to God, and with becoming ardour pursue the immortal prize! What a mercy is it that God does not cease to call, to call aloud, to pierce our very hearts by his visitations, that he might compel us to forsake all, and follow him! O to be truly his! declaring plainly by our conversation, that we seek a country; that our treasure is in heaven, and that our hearts are there also.

I am,
With much respect, my dear Sir,
Yours, &c.

J. BOWDEN.

THE END.

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